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A RATIONALE FOR THE INCLUSION OF WORLD
LITERATURE COURSES IN THE GENERAL
EDUCATION CURRICULUM

Doris L. Lindsey

A dissertation presented to the
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A RATIONALE FOR THE INCLUSION OF WORLD
LITERATURE COURSES IN THE GENERAL
EDUCATION CURRICULUM

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ABSTRACT

A RATIONALE FOR THE INCLUSION OF WORLD LITERATURE COURSES IN THE GENERAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM

by Doris L. Lindsey

The concept of general education has changed greatly in the last thirty years. A number of prominent educators bowing to student demand no longer consider general education a viable part of a college curriculum. Even fewer regard world literature as an essential part of the general education program in English either as required or as optional course work. Recent stringent economic pressures have given added impetus to the trend to modify and, in some instances, to abandon all general education requirements.

Despite the current trend away from the traditional general education programs of earlier times, there is a group of equally prominent educators who contend that general education programs are more necessary than ever to the current generation of college students. These educators deplore the vitiating effect that technology has had on the ideas and values of today's college students.

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More specifically, a number of scholars and educators in the field of English believe that intellectual salvation for students lies in a resurrection of their common cultural heritage through a study of world literature. This line of thinking, though not in the present educational mainstream must be recognized as an island fortress in the rushing technological current.

Chapter II reviews three major traditional philosophical systems that have influenced the patterns of American education in the past. The chapter concludes with a discussion of two of the current trends in educational philosophy.

Chapter III traces the development of the general education curriculum. Particular emphasis is placed on general education in the 1950's when these programs reached their greatest popularity. It is during this period that courses in world literature are offered extensively either as part of required general education humanities programs or as required courses in English general education programs. A reversal of emphasis in education occurs when the Russian Sputnik startles the world.

Chapter IV explores the status of college and university programs in the 1970's and comments upon the role of world literature in these programs. A review of recent literature and current practices reveals the fact that world

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literature is considered by a majority of today's scholars and educators as an important part of a student's education despite the lack of agreement on the issues of methodology and genres. This fact is clear from the evidence presented by Thomas Wilcox's random sampling of colleges throughout the nation. A more narrowly prescribed survey of the thinking and practices of Tennessee's scholars and educators reinforces the general findings of Wilcox's larger survey.

The conclusions drawn from the study demonstrate that English departments are concerned with offering students the best possible literary experiences and with establishing a viable relationship between the past and the present. Some general guidelines are provided by the writer for those whose special province in the field of English is the teaching of world literature.

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Sincere appreciation goes to the writer's family whose patience and understanding were essential to the successful completion of this dissertation.

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CHAPTER I

Introduction

Statement of the Problem

The purpose of this study is to provide both a rationale and guidelines for the inclusion of courses in world literature as a part of the lower division general education requirements for English at the university level.

Data from various sources, some empirical, some subjective, some descriptive, and information extracted from the current thinking and practices of scholars in the disciplines of English and Education form the foundation for this study.

The traditional educational philosophies concerned with the inclusion of world literature as part of a general education curriculum are also explored and are used to illuminate the problem.

Chapter II describes the influence of three major philosophical systems on the educational philosophy in American institutions of higher learning. The chapter includes a discussion of two important influences in current educational thinking.

Chapter III presents a survey of the development of general education programs in America and describes the controversies engendered by the establishment of these programs. The chapter concludes with a description of the curtailment of general education programs, a curtailment brought about by the Russian's success in the field of scientific technology and by an overwhelming number of students demanding early specialization.

Chapter IV presents the general findings of a national random sampling of colleges and universities on the question of the importance of world literature for today's students. The chapter also presents the results of a similar state-wide survey in Tennessee conducted by the writer.

The conclusions sum up the two major opposing views of general education programs and the role of world literature in them and suggests some guidelines for teachers and educators whose special interests lie in the field of world literature.

Investigative Points and Terminologies

The terms "world literature" and "general education" are an essential part of this study. Unfortunately, more than one definition of world literature exists. Reputable scholars differ strongly in their definitions of the world's

literary and cultural perimeter. For example, it has been defined by Richard G. Moulton as the literature of Western civilizations, a literature which stems from the Greek and Roman classics and which finds its clearest exposition in the national literatures of the states of Atlantic community and North America.¹ On the other hand, D. M. Lang and D. R. Dudley would include Oriental literature and the literature of those nations that may have developed outside of the mainstream of the Graeco-Roman developmental influence.² Thus, these scholars would include the emerging nations of Africa and Southeast Asia within their compass.

Obviously, then, more than one definition of this term can be validly established and further elaboration of the definition may be required as the study proceeds. As a working definition, however, we will assume that "world literature" refers to the literature of the Greek and Roman classics, the literatures that stem from those classics such as European literature, English literature, and American literature as well as those aspects of non-Western literatures--African, Asian, et cetera--which may be deemed

¹Richard G. Moulton, World Literature and Its Place in General Culture (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1921), pp. 5-8.

²David M. Lang and Donald R. Dudley, Classical, Oriental, and African Literature (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1969), pp. 6-10.

appropriate by each instructor for the needs of the student in specific institutional settings. This pragmatic definition might be challenged by some knowledgeable scholars³ but would be supported by other equally knowledgeable scholars and educators.⁴ Possibly the choice of definition is not so important as is the acknowledgement that more than one definition can be postulated and defended.

The term "general education" will be thought of as core experiences which emphasize humanitarian learnings common to all scholars. These learnings are those which every man needs in order to live as a responsible member of the society of humankind. General education is a set of experiences and opportunities for learning in which students are exposed to a selective study of man's accumulated knowledge in order to gain insight into the present and possibly the future. General education is not so much a set of facts and descriptions as it is a broadening exposure to a range of important ideas and values and an assessment of their results in human experience.

In addition to the terms general education and world literature, it will be necessary to define certain technical

³Robert M. Hutchins, The Conflict in Education (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc., 1953), pp. 67-76.

⁴Joseph Remenyi, World Literatures (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1956), pp. 4-9.

terms which the philosopher commonly uses to describe the concepts of truth, reality, and value. Clarification of the terms ontology, epistemology, and axiology will facilitate an understanding of the discussion of the relationship of the philosophical world views of idealism, realism, and pragmatism to the aims and problems of education in Chapter II.

The term "ontology" describes that area of philosophic speculation which seeks the meaning of reality. Ontological investigations must begin with some basic assumptions about the nature of reality itself. Within the ontological framework, the philosopher attempts to distinguish between reality and what appears to be reality. Not all philosophers agree on what reality is. Some define reality as the physical world,⁵ while others say that reality is a kind of ideal reality that exists only in the mind of God;⁶ a third opinion holds that true reality is found in an orderly universe, subject to universal

⁵Theodore Brameld, Patterns of Educational Philosophy (Yonkers-on-Hudson: World Book Company, 1950), pp. 216-220. See also John Wild, Introduction to Realistic Philosophy (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1948), pp. 67-79.

⁶Robert M. Hutchins, The Higher Learning in America (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1948), pp. 31-50. See also Jacques Maritain, "Thomist Views on Education," Modern Philosophies in Education, Fifty-fourth Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education, ed. N. B. Henry, Part I (Chicago: The Society, 1955), pp. 95-101.

scientific principles.⁷ Regardless of definition, ontology remains a vital branch of philosophic inquiry.

A second philosophic area of investigation, called epistemology, is the study of obtaining and validating knowledge. The questions of what truth is, what can be known about it, and how it can be known are extremely difficult questions to answer, and few philosophers agree completely on any one set of answers. Therefore, in order to avoid reviewing the many long and complex definitions, a simplified definition of epistemology will be used for the purposes of the study. Epistemology will be generally considered as the study of the origin, nature, methods, and limits of knowledge.

A third concern of philosophers is that of axiology, or value. In more generalized terms, it is a study of good and evil, beauty and ugliness, right and wrong, and other similar areas of values and contrasts. Many philosophers consider axiology as probably the most important of the three branches of philosophic inquiry. It is the opinion of those who hold this view that, although a specific view of reality or truth can determine value judgments, it is value

⁷Sidney Hook, The Metaphysics of Pragmatism (Chicago: Open Court Publishing Company, 1927), pp. 19-26. See also John L. Childs, American Pragmatism and Education (New York: Henry Holt and Company, Inc., 1956), pp. 39-70.

judgments which determine behavior.⁸ Axiology, therefore, plays a most important role in educational philosophy, for what educators believe to be of value will determine the emphases in the educational process.

Further elaboration upon the three areas of philosophic inquiry, i.e., ontology, epistemology, and axiology, would not be in accordance with the purpose of the study which is, in this instance, to facilitate an understanding of these terms when they are used in later chapters.

Background and Significance of the Study

The major purpose for offering courses in world literature is to modify the provincial outlook and attitude of most college students. Students need to become aware of the thinking of the great writers of the world, and they need to develop an appreciation for all excellent literature, regardless of its cultural origin or its place in time. In this way, the goal of encouraging understanding of other nations and cultures may be realized. This study should be of value to all teachers in the field of English as well as those whose special province and competency is the teaching of world literature.

⁸Brameld, Patterns of Educational Philosophy, pp. 217-218.

Limitations of the Study

This study is limited to the examination of some possible logical and rational justifications for the inclusion of world literature courses in general education programs of colleges and Universities. It is not the intent or purpose of the study to establish specific curricula, to comment definitively on courses of study or programs already established, nor to suggest specific works, genres, or methodologies, though some are mentioned as examples of current practice. Arguments and rationales are evaluated critically, current practices in the field are reviewed, and opinions of scholars in English and the professional judgments of reputable general educationists are presented. Some of the data obtained are doubtless empirical, but the larger proportions are analytical and descriptive.

The results of this examination provide an insight into the critical thinking and current practices of many reputable scholars in the fields of English and Education on the topic of world literature and its value or lack of value in the general education curriculum.

CHAPTER II

Foundations of Major Educational Philosophies

A. Background

Nothing is more permanent in civilization than ideas, and it is through ideas that man relates to his predecessors and crosses all racial and cultural barriers. This is particularly true in America where, despite its recent but unique cultural ferment, its background remains part of the European, Judeo-Christian civilization. In order to understand, appreciate, and judge the art, the science, the religion, and the moral ideals of today's world, it is imperative to understand those great achievements in the past that have created the atmosphere in which man's spirit moves, an atmosphere which can be called philosophy.¹

The study of philosophy encompasses a vast and all-inclusive field, for the history of philosophy extends back more than three thousand years and covers every aspect of human existence. The field of philosophy has been regarded

¹John H. Randall, Jr., The Making of the Modern Mind (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1926), p. 5.

in some periods of history as the highest form of study which man could pursue; in others, it has been considered as ancillary to Christianity; in still others, it was looked upon as a difficult and erudite metaphysical field of speculation.²

Because of the changing concepts and roles of philosophy throughout history, it is difficult to decide what is philosophy and what is not. If philosophy refers to an understanding of the meaning of the physical universe, then science should be included. On the other hand, if philosophers are those who can grasp the eternal and immutable, then poets, artists, writers, and religious leaders should be included as well. In any event, philosophy, in the classical sense of the word, refers to a systematic approach to life which provides man with a more clearly defined concept of himself and of his place in the universe.

Western philosophy began in ancient Greece before the time of Socrates and relied on man's reasoning abilities to explain the mysteries of the natural world and the nature of man. The logical approach offered an alternative to the approaches of tradition, superstition, myth, and dogma which

²Elmer Sprague, What Is Philosophy? (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 38-42.

persisted, and continue to persist, as modes of explanation. Philosophic pursuit, generated by curiosity, imagination, and a desire for knowledge, attempts to identify and analyze phenomena and then organize them into a logical framework, a process which not only provides the philosopher with a broader view of life but also makes possible the organization and systematization of human experience.³

The advent of modern science and the division of knowledge into many disciplines led such philosophers as Ludwig Wittgenstein to view the role of philosophy as limited to areas where the natural sciences prevail.⁴ Modern philosophy, like modern technology, demands more precision, more specialization. Despite the fact that some philosophers still attempt to formulate broad major systems of thought, the trend toward specialization continues.⁵

In opposition to this trend, Sartrean Existentialism has arisen as a modern philosophy which refuses to consider scientific investigation as pertinent to its thinking. The Existential philosopher views traditional philosophy as

³Kenneth H. Hansen, Philosophy for American Education (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice Hall, Inc., 1960), pp. 10-18. See also J. Gordon Chamberlin, Toward A Phenomenology of Education (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1969), pp. 143-152.

⁴Justus Hartnack, Wittgenstein and Modern Philosophy (New York: New York University Press, 1965), pp. 56-57.

⁵John M. Rich, ed., Readings in the Philosophy of Education (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc., 1972), pp. 344-347.

obsolete and demeaning to man, whose individuality is lost in the vastness of the metaphysical systems. A discussion of the Existential viewpoint will be developed more fully later, but at this point it is important only to note that a philosophic point of view does exist which places great emphasis on man as an individual.⁶

Numerous interpretations of the nature and function of philosophy exist. Originally the word "philosophy" meant the love of wisdom and knowledge; "education" is derived from "educare," to bring up or to train. Thus, philosophy can be viewed as the parent discipline and philosophy of education as an offspring. In contradiction to this point of view, however, education is regarded by some as a field to which the discoveries of a particular philosophy may be applied.

One view of the function of philosophy in the field of education holds that a philosophy of education can be derived from general philosophic systems, including guidelines for policy and practice.⁷

A second view is that philosophical positions can be arrived at through an inductive approach. Such positions

⁶John P. Strain, Modern Philosophies of Education (New York: Random House, Inc., 1971), pp. 470-497.

⁷Sidney Hook, "The Scope of Philosophy of Education," Harvard Educational Review, 26 (Spring, 1956), 142-148.

can be discerned from case studies of the teaching process or from examination of the assumptions underlying educational problems. In this way, attention focuses on the phenomena of education rather than on philosophy.⁸

Still a third proposal claims that the purpose of philosophy is to organize and prescribe a course for educational practice with little or no development of the philosophical or theoretical aspects of education.⁹

A fourth and more recent interpretation, one which arises from the application of analytic philosophy to education, views philosophy of education as a study of the language and logic of education. Studies of the use and misuse of basic educational concepts and the logic of education arguments constitute the areas of investigation.¹⁰

A fifth and final view is the belief that philosophy of education is not a doctrine of directives but a subject that promotes liberal education and whose purpose is to serve as a humane study that needs no justification from a utilitarian standpoint.¹¹ Regardless of viewpoint,

⁸Rich, Readings, pp. 344-347.

⁹John Dewey, Democracy and Education (New York: Macmillan Company, 1916), p. 386. See also Foster McMurray, "Preface to an Autonomous Discipline of Education," Educational Theory, 5 (July, 1955), 129-140.

¹⁰Rich, Readings, pp. 348-350.

¹¹Hansen, Philosophy for American Education, pp. 15-17.

attention must be focused on the bases of philosophy which are needed in order to attack educational problems meaningfully.

All traditional philosophy asks three basic questions: What is real; what is true; what is value? These questions form the three branches of the study of philosophy which are essential not only to an understanding of a particular philosophy itself, but also to a recognition of the influence which the various answers have upon the educational process. The branch of philosophy which questions reality is referred to as ontology; the second branch of philosophy, epistemology, concerns the question of truth; the third branch, axiology, deals with the question of value. This general threefold division of philosophy is also accepted by educationists as the central framework of the philosophy of education.¹²

Whether examining the aims of education, the motivation of learning, or the social, political, or moral dimensions of the educative process, the question of values inevitably enters the picture. Indeed, values are of prime importance in the selection of curriculum studies, a selection which raises questions of epistemology as well. Since the student's method of approach to knowledge is

¹²Ibid., p. 18.

through the curriculum, the nature of knowledge is of paramount importance in the organization of a curriculum. Ultimately, difficulties in the problems of axiology and epistemology must be considered in the light of the world of reality; thus, the nature of human nature, as well as the world in which it lies, must be examined. These, then, are some of the problems which constitute the content of educational philosophy.¹³

Because of the obvious relationship between general philosophy and educational philosophy, an examination of the background of several general philosophies will be undertaken in order to point out the contributions that philosophers have made to the study of the aims and needs of education. For the purpose of this study, the scope of the philosophies to be explored will be limited to two categories: (1) the three major philosophical systems, Idealism, Realism, and Pragmatism, with a brief look at Progressivism, an off-shoot of Pragmatism, and (2) current trends of educational philosophy. These systems will be examined from the standpoint of their ontological, epistemological, and axiological views. Definitions of these three major systems of philosophy will adhere closely to those set forth by several scholars who are highly respected in the field of education,

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John S. Brubacher, Modern Philosophies of Education (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., 1939), pp. 1-22.

such as Kenneth Hansen and Van Cleve Morris. The concepts of each philosophy and one or two major philosophers representative of each system will be examined closely. It is acknowledged that the philosophers selected for use in this study are not the only ones that can be made; nevertheless, these choices are representative ones. Finally, based on an investigation of various recent scholarly endeavors, current trends in educational philosophy will be reviewed.

B. Established Philosophical Systems

Because there are so many different ways of viewing the nature of the world we live in, it is not surprising that philosophers have developed a rather comprehensive terminology for describing certain philosophic positions. Some of these general viewpoints are represented in distinctive systems of philosophy whose nomenclatures are ascribed either to their chief proponents or to the major beliefs of that philosophy. To use philosophy at all, one needs to understand at least some of the philosopher's language; to use philosophy adequately, one must examine the historical intellectual disciplines of philosophy which focus on the problems of education. Through such an examination, one learns to appreciate the philosophic contributions of earlier centuries and, thus, it is possible to bring a greater degree of philosophical understanding to

the problems of education. Philosophy achieves its zenith as a human intellectual effort when it is able to gain a broad perspective of the problems of truth, reality, and value. As the various conflicting or complementary philosophical positions are explored, it is possible to obtain a clear perspective of the influence and effect that the philosophies of idealism, realism, and pragmatism have had on the field of education.¹⁴

One simple and widely accepted way of patterning the different educational philosophies is to place them in three major divisions: Idealism, Realism, and Pragmatism. Progressivism, a branch of Pragmatism, will be included in the study of educational philosophies because of its influence on American educational philosophy. Admittedly, these classifications are not completely satisfactory, for certainly more than three systems of philosophy can be identified; however, these categories are used widely in scholarly publications as well as in courses in general philosophy and, therefore, are relatively familiar to those individuals who have acquired a background of terminology in the field of education as well as in general philosophy. Although recognized as disparate philosophies, on some points Idealism and Realism seem to have as much similarity

¹⁴Hansen, Philosophy for American Education, pp. 20-24.

as diversity of position. The philosophy of Pragmatism, on the other hand, is often dismissed by more traditional philosophers as not a philosophical system at all, but rather as a method of testing the validity of all concepts by their practical results. The usefulness of categorizing these educational philosophies in this manner can be justified because it does point up distinctions among philosophic views that have a great deal of relevance for educational problems. In order to facilitate an understanding of the pertinence of these philosophies for the problems of education, an elaboration upon these particular philosophic systems is vital to this study. Other philosophies may be mentioned in passing, but major emphasis will be placed on the philosophic positions of Idealism, Realism, and Pragmatism.

Only a very few philosophers associated with each of the various philosophies will be discussed, for both the philosophers and the variant forms of each philosophy are too numerous and too complex for an in-depth examination. What is of more importance to this study is the consideration of what each philosophy in its basic form has contributed to the field of education.

Idealism. In its simplest form, Idealism is a philosophic view which contends that all basic reality exists in the realm of ideas. This view does not deny the

existence of a physical world; it merely contends that true reality exists in the mind of the observer, not in the thing observed. The Idealist considers himself the only true Realist, for only he perceives the truth about real, concrete objects, i.e., the real exists only in the mind. The Idealist philosopher believes, generally, that reality is more than what is observed on the surface. He contends that the final essence of all being is part of a larger, but unseen reality; the day to day "real experiences" are only reflections of an ideal reality which exists in a world that man can not comprehend through his senses. Though the Idealist himself is limited by these same senses, the Idea of the essential nature and quality of things is quite clear to him. Some Idealists refer to this philosophy as "objective idealism" because the subjective perceptions of ordinary daily experiences are not true reality. It has been said that ". . . Ideas themselves are beyond the range of human observation and cannot be subject to the mistakes of such . . .; therefore, ideas are the actual objective realities."¹⁵

From the Idealist's view of reality to his view of truth is but a short step, for truth, like reality, is based on that which lies beyond the realm of the physical world.

¹⁵ Sprague, What Is Philosophy?, pp. 38-42.

To the Idealist, truth is not arrived at from a particular set of ascertained facts; truth is an unchanging, eternal, absolute value which comes to man in various ways; but most importantly, truth comes through the medium of intuition or insight. Although he is often ridiculed for his belief that truth is given to man through these somewhat mystical means, the Idealist points out that he is being quite logical according to his ontological belief, that is, reality is embodied in Idea. Therefore, a valid epistemological interpretation would result in that reality's being made known to man by a means beyond the realm of human perception. The Idealist has, it appears, an epistemology which corresponds directly and logically with his ontology.

In common with his views of reality and truth, the Idealist holds that values, too, are eternal, absolute, and fixed. Despite the numerous, often erroneous interpretations and perceptions of values by man, particularly ethical and aesthetic values, the values themselves remain unchanged. The Idealist maintains that these values remain fixed and absolute, though customs, cultural developments, and mores may fluctuate.¹⁶

In general, the philosophy of Idealism embraces the above mentioned views of reality, truth, and values

¹⁶Ibid., pp. 18-22.

although many variations of the central view of Idealism exist, ranging from the static Idealism of Plato to the later version of dynamic idealistic thought expressed by Hegel. The root position of Idealism began with the Greek philosophers more than two thousand years ago and is deeply embedded in Western man's thinking processes. The word Idealism itself is derived from Plato's conception of ultimate Ideas. Technically speaking, the word should read Idea-ism, an ontology of ideas. The letter "l" has been inserted in "Idealism" for its euphonious effect, for Plato was not speaking of ideals in terms of valued goals, but rather he was referring to ideas and to the fact that ideas in their ultimate form were eternal and perfect. Thus, the forms of things which man experienced were imperfect reproductions of the idea-l.¹⁷

Varying interpretations have developed from Plato's original concept. Hegel, for instance, carried Plato's philosophy beyond the static realm of unchanging idea-l's adding a dynamic interpretation of Idealism. Reality for Hegel consisted of opposites, such as up and down, hot and cold. These opposites represent a dialectic of nature--a dialectic which abounds in human thought in such opposing ideas as love and hate, individual and society, justice and

¹⁷Plato, The Republic, trans. Benjamin Jowett (New York: Random House, 1943), pp. 20-21.

injustice. Hegel contended that each of Plato's ideas had its own antithesis; hence, Plato's Ideal world is more than eternal and absolute; it is a moving stream of conscious intelligence at work. Hegel held the view that every thesis can be set against its antithesis which will produce a synthesis; the synthesis will, in turn, become a new thesis--a process which will continue ad infinitum. Throughout this continuing process, there is a Cosmic Idea which expresses itself in the historic events of men and societies. Hegel further believed that the Cosmic Idea was a segment of Ultimate Reality attempting to find expression in the world of physical reality and constant change; sages, scholars, poets, artists, and theologians could occasionally catch a glimpse of Ultimate Reality as they attempted through their limited perceptions to peer into the Absolute.¹⁸

Generally speaking, then, one may conclude that those who adhere to the philosophic position of Idealism believe that all moral laws have their roots in some great overriding moral principle which in a religious context might be called God, although not all Idealists believe in God in the historical context of the word. The Idealist's philosophy thrives in those studies in the liberal arts

¹⁸Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, Hegel's Science of Logic, trans. A. V. Miller (London: Allen and Unwin, 1969), pp. 783-786.

which provide substance for reflection and the liberation of the mind and whose content consists of ideas and concepts.¹⁹

Realism. It is generally agreed by most philosophers that the system of Realism began with Aristotle whose simplicity of approach to the problem of ontology is still dominant in the twentieth century. Aristotle visualized Reality as Matter, representing pure possibility. As it assumed more and more Form, it became more complex and, as immaterial qualities such as thought and sensation became evident, Form/Matter ultimately emerged as pure contemplation. In this process of elevation from Prime Matter, which possesses only the minimum of Form, to the higher operations of thought, the attributes of Mind and Reason noticeable increase, until Pure Mind, Absolute Reason, or, according to Aristotle, Pure Form emerges. Individuals can never hope to attain this level of logic, but it is possible to comprehend its role. It is the Principle of Reason, the great First Cause, the Prime Mover, the Absolute Knower independent of the world, which knows

¹⁹Foster McMurray, "Preface to an Autonomous Discipline of Education," Readings in the Philosophy of Education, ed. John M. Rich (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc., 1972), pp. 321-322.

and rules all categories of nature and which acts upon it, endowing it with movement, development, order, and reason.²⁰

Aristotle fuses his ontological view of the world with that of Plato by incorporating the world of ideas with the world of senses. For Aristotle, there was only one reality, and it stretched in a hierarchial manner between the low base of potentiality and the peak of actuality. Man stands near the middle of the ontological spectrum, sharing the material things of the world through his body and participating through his mind in the rationality of Pure Form, but to a lesser degree than in the physical sense. Thus, through his ingenious Form/Matter Hypothesis, Aristotle brought the focus of Greek thought to bear on the actual world. What to Plato was an illusory world of shadows, a view which he later discarded for a real world of Ideas, became for Aristotle a world of things in motion, a huge mechanism complete with pattern, harmonious movement, and order.²¹

Realism is probably one of the most widely accepted world views in philosophy, more so perhaps than Idealism.

²⁰Edward H. Reisner, "Philosophy and Science in the Western World: A Historical Overview," Philosophies of Education, Forty-first Yearbook, Part I, ed. N. B. Henry (Chicago: The Society, 1942), p. 12.

²¹Aristotle, "Metaphysics," in On Man and the Universe, trans. John H. MacMahon (New York: Walter J. Black, Inc., 1943), pp. 32-27.

For the Realist, ultimate reality exists in the natural world; it is outside the self and ". . . independent of any knower who may come to have knowledge of it."²²

Like Idealism, Realism is a philosophic system which has scores of variations, but unlike Idealism it concerns itself primarily with the reality of the world of ". . . independent reals . . .," ". . . inexorable fact . . .," and of ". . . objects that dwell outside the stream of human experience . . ." functioning independently of the knower.²³

The Realist views reality as existing in things and their relationships and believes that reality is expressed in natural law; whereas, the Idealist believes that reality exists in ideas and their relationships and views ultimate reality as an expression of the rule of cosmic or divine law. The philosophies of Realism and Idealism are similar in one instance; both recognize absolutes in their own systems. In his epistemological approach to a problem the Realist relies primarily on a logical approach rather than on intuition or experience. To the Realist, truth is distinguished by the fact that it can be known because it is real, and man is able to grasp these truths through his

²²J. Donald Butler, Four Philosophies and Their Practice in Education and Religion (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1957), p. 408.

²³Frederick S. Breed, Education and the New Realism (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1939), pp. 103-108.

intellect. Moreover, the Realist perceives a correspondence between actual, realistic truth and the perception of bits of knowledge, i.e., facts, and it is this correspondence theory of knowledge in percept and concept which provides a rational basis for a system of education. Logical thought is the pinnacle of the Realist's epistemology and, therefore, the cultivation of a logical, rational approach to problems receives the greatest emphasis in his educational philosophy.²⁴

From the axiological standpoint, the Realist's view of the "good" consists of acceptance of and conformity to the laws of nature as they exist; "evil" is that which does not correspond to the order and regularity of the universe. It should be brought out at this point that the Realist is not necessarily materialistic. He is considered a naturalist as opposed to the supernaturalist, and, for him, Realism is grounded in the world of law and order where truth, value, and reality correspond to that world.²⁵

Like most philosophies in the course of their theoretical peregrinations, Realism no longer resembles its original Aristotelian thesis. Extended interpretations of this ontology can be traced into its twentieth century

²⁴Aristotle, "Metaphysics," pp. 11-16.

²⁵Ibid.

concept, but that is not of great importance at this juncture.

The next most logical step in an examination of Realism is to consider the theories of St. Thomas Aquinas whose adaptation of Aristotle's insights resulted in a more refined metaphysics. St. Thomas created a rapprochement between Aristotle's cosmos of truth and reason and the Christian theologians' universe of compassion and love where men were viewed as spiritual as well as rational creatures. Indeed, Aquinas' philosophy, which became known as Thomism, is so closely related to the writings of Aristotle that one writer has referred to Thomism as ". . . Aristotelianism Christianized."²⁶

St. Thomas Aquinas, a thirteenth-century scholar and philosopher, formulated the theory that it was possible to advance Aristotle's concept of Potentiality and Actuality to a new and higher level of intellectual analysis. St. Thomas superimposed upon Aristotle's hierarchy of Matter and Form his own ultimate hierarchy of Essence and Existence. In St. Thomas' view, Essence was the Principle of Potentiality. Essences alone remained static, but when joined with Existence (the Principle of Actuality) the essence of man becomes complete. Conversely, Existence depends on Essence;

²⁶James Mulhern, A History of Education (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1946), p. 199.

like Form in Aristotle's system, Existence requires an object on which to bestow its powers, and this object is Essence. Although each is dependent upon the other, Existence, as pure principle, outranks Essence from an ontological standpoint; a view which parallels Aristotle's theory that man received more of his knowledge through Matter than through Pure Form.²⁷

St. Thomas pursued the Aristotelian hierarchy of Matter and Form further and arrived at what, for him, was an ultimate hierarchy of Essence and Existence. All essences are limited expressions of the Principle of Existence, though some essences possess more existence than other essences. All beings depend for their existence on something else; they are not responsible for their own being. In the hierarchy of existence plants, animals, and men, in that order, increase in the act of existing, and each shares a corresponding responsibility for his own being. As the limitations of physical existence decrease, a higher expression of being becomes possible; thus, the angels, who have no corporeal existence, rank higher than men on the ladder of Existence. Finally, at the pinnacle of Aquinas' hierarchy is Pure Being in whom Essence and Existence are united, for God and Being are one and the same. Aquinas

²⁷St. Thomas Aquinas, On Being and Essence (Toronto: The Pontifical Institute of Medieval Studies, 1949), pp. 46-48.

theorized that it was possible for man to arrive at the Godhead through the intellect and a rigorous system of logic.²⁸

Under the aegis of this doctrine, a curriculum would obviously stress studies designed to assist man toward an ultimate union with God and would probably, though not necessarily, be found in ecclesiastical institutions of learning. In terms of secular educational philosophy, a Realist pedagogy tends to emphasize those portions of the learning experience which rely on sense perception. Books are important, of course, but concrete classroom demonstrations, audio-visual aids, and field trips, all of which emphasize the perception of the real world of things, are of greater value in the view of the Realist. Thus, a curriculum which stresses the physical sciences and mathematics would reflect the educational philosophy of the Realist.²⁹

Pragmatism. A third well established world view in philosophy, one which did not become prominent until the latter part of the nineteenth century, has a variety of labels but is most commonly called Pragmatism. The

²⁸Ibid.

²⁹Theodore Brameld, Patterns of Educational Philosophy (Yonkers-on-Hudson: World Book Company, 1950), pp. 221-230.

followers of Pragmatism believe that the truth, reality, or value of anything is primarily determined by its results, that is, how it works in practice. The familiar but over-worked expression "if it works, it's true" is an oversimplified statement of pragmatic belief. The Pragmatist places a great amount of stress upon what effect the testing of reality, truth, and value of anything has in terms of human experience, and this concern has given rise to the label of Empiricism. Instrumentalism is yet another term used interchangeably with Pragmatism. The Instrumentalist views human experience in all of its manifestations as an instrument for solving problems. Yet another term applied to the Pragmatist is that of Experimentalist. The Experimentalist's philosophy is one which relies strongly on a direct-trial method of discovering truth by the consequences of an action. Although different aspects of this particular philosophy may be stressed according to a philosopher's point of view, the idea of learning through experience seems to be the main thrust, regardless of the approach used. Perhaps the definition of Experimentalism as learning through experience should be qualified. The process of experiential learning is not limited to sensory experience; it includes reflective thought and speculation. What Experimentalism does not

include, however, is a transposition of these sensory experiences to mystical ones.³⁰

Pragmatism is frequently misunderstood as a philosophy because many scholars claim that it lacks the long, respectable, academic tradition of Idealism and Realism. Yet, as a general philosophy and as a specific educational philosophy, Pragmatism actually does have a long and respectable history. Matters of practicality and humane values, deep concerns of the nineteenth century Pragmatist, are the same concerns as those of the earlier philosophers.³¹

No specific early Greek philosopher developed the doctrine of Pragmatism as was noted in the case of Idealism and Realism, but one of the earliest Greek philosophers, Heraclitus, developed a philosophic theory which some scholars consider as corresponding to some of the basic tenets of modern Pragmatism. Heraclitus' philosophy developed the central thesis that no fixed or absolute reality, truth, or value exists; everything is in a state of change.³²

³⁰Brubacher, Modern Philosophies of Education, pp. 10-15.

³¹Hansen, Philosophy for American Education, pp. 70-75.

³²Heraclitus of Ephesus, Fragment 12, The Cosmic Fragments, trans. H. Diels, ed. G. S. Kirk (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1954), pp. 369-380.

Other essentially pragmatic principles gradually emerged with the development of Western philosophic thought, culminating in the American educational pragmatism of Charles Peirce, William James, and John Dewey.³³ The views of Peirce and James will be examined from the standpoint of their common pragmatic philosophy; Dewey's views will be treated separately, not only as a general philosophy but also as a philosophy which deeply affected his approach to American education.

Peirce received little public recognition of his philosophic writing during his lifetime until William James, the well known American psychologist and philosopher, called attention to Peirce's ideas in his (James') Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking. In his book, James pays tribute to Peirce as the first scholar to introduce the principles of Pragmatism into philosophic thinking in America. Peirce based his philosophic position on the principle that thought and action are connected in such fashion that thought produces beliefs upon which man can act with confidence. Man's conception of an object is attained through his experience with that object, and his experience,

³³Brubacher, Modern Philosophies of Education, p. 18.

therefore, limits the positive significance of his conception.³⁴

James' application of this basic tenet of Peirce's philosophy to his own views resulted in a broader concept of the doctrine of Pragmatism. For James, the scope of Pragmatism includes two areas--first, the use of Pragmatism as a method and, second, as a theory of truth, both of which appear to be interrelated. The Pragmatic method does not represent any special results; it is a method only. Theories are instruments, not solutions to problems. The Pragmatic method is an ". . . attitude of orientation . . . of looking away from first principles . . . and of looking toward consequences. . . ." In this manner James redefined in brief, clear terms the Pragmatic principle which Peirce had earlier projected. James' theory of truth corresponds to his definition of Pragmatic method, for truth is made up of ideas which are part of man's experience and which become true only to the extent that man is able to achieve a satisfactory relation with other parts of his experience. "Truth becomes a class-name for all sorts of definite working values in experience. . . . Truth is one species of good . . . not a category distinct from good. . . . The

³⁴William James, Pragmatism: A New Name for Some Old Ways of Thinking (New York: Longmans, Green and Company, 1907), pp. 43-81.

true is the name of whatever proves itself to be good in the way of belief. . . . Pragmatism's only test of probable truth is what works best in the way of leading us, what fits every part of life best and combines with the collectivity of experience's demands, nothing being omitted."³⁵

From the philosophies of these two influential American Pragmatists one important fact emerges. Experience is the basis for the Pragmatist's view of reality, truth, and values. It would seem that Pragmatism is a philosophic view which places more emphasis on epistemology than on ontology or axiology because truth is more crucial in the kind of reality which the Pragmatist tries to know. To the Pragmatist, truth can only be discovered through a wide range of human activities--activities which he calls "experience." This philosophy conflicts strongly with that of the Realist and Idealist, each of which relies on a single method of arriving at truth. From the Pragmatist's point of view, knowledge is obtained and substantiated by solving problems through the intelligent experience of human reasoning. When a problem is solved and a satisfactory answer is found, the Pragmatist accepts that solution as the truth, at least at that point in time. He believes that the only proof of whether or not something "works" is through

³⁵Ibid.

experience--not just a single experience, but through the cumulative effect of planned and shared experiences. When certain kinds of learning experiences are connected in a cumulative manner, the true value of experience emerges. The cumulative manner indicates that some planning is necessary in order to build experience. Further, the Pragmatist insists that the planned and cumulative experience must be shared with others in order to yield the maximum learning value. This epistemology is saved from becoming a private, insulated type of solipsism, in which each human being may believe anything he wishes, by the fact that shared experiences may result in shared estimates of results. Through group judgment of consequences, a tentative truth can be asserted which will be accepted until future experience alters, reinforces, or rejects it.³⁶

The ontological and axiological views of the Pragmatist reflect an outlook similar to his epistemological view, i.e., reality and values are not fixed or absolute. Basically, reality is defined as the experience of ordinary human beings in ordinary life. Separate, daily experiences do not constitute reality, but rather it is the whole framework of experience in its totality which constitutes reality and values. In the Pragmatist's view, there is no actual basis for any kind of value judgment except human judgment.

³⁶Ibid.

Hence, the Pragmatist is very liberal in his value judgments, for he believes that humane values are the highest known values and that a liberal interpretation of these values is to be preferred to a fixed interpretation. The Pragmatist, unlike the Realist and the Idealist, has no need for impersonal moral law or for an ineffable sense of beauty and order attributable to a universal force. Man is his own controlling force in making value judgments on whatever affects him; therefore, from the Pragmatist's point of view, that which is good is that which works for satisfactory human experience. Obviously, then, the Pragmatist denies any mystical or authoritative tendencies and has a philosophical framework which seems to consider reality, truth, and values in relativistic terms. Ontologically, experience is the best way of knowing what is true; axiologically, shared experiences are the highest known value for a given moment. The Pragmatist has strong doubts that fixed, immutable values exist, and as a relativist he must qualify every statement in terms of proven or unproven relationships.³⁷

John Dewey is regarded by most educators as the most influential contributor of American education in the twentieth century. Although his philosophy, from an

³⁷Lawrence G. Thomas, "The Ontology of Experimentalism," Educational Theory, 6 (January, 1956), 177-183.

educational standpoint, is primarily pragmatic, many scholars and critics apply the term "Experimentalism" to Dewey's practices and beliefs. Dewey viewed educational aims as the anticipated outcomes of "on going" activities or projects. Educational aims guided and motivated action and were the standards by which results of the action were judged, but Dewey suggested no specific aims of education; the classroom activity, the student's motivation, and the learning consequences of that activity constituted an educational aim. Thus, for Dewey, educational aims were as varied as life situations, and no one aim was preferred to any other. Dewey regarded the general aim of education as the continual reconstruction of experience in which change was accepted unquestioningly. Truth must be pursued through problem solving in the schools; however, Dewey did acknowledge that the educator's ability to provide life situations in the classroom was limited by the fact that the world is in a constant state of change. Thus, classroom experiences which typified life experiences would change accordingly--a method which reflected Dewey's belief that education should not be a preparation for life but should be life itself. Dewey's statement that ". . . the educational process has no end beyond itself; it is its own

end . . ." sums up his educational philosophy in a clear and succinct fashion.³⁸

In the light of this examination of the basic philosophy of Pragmatism, the Pragmatic view of education can be readily determined. The Pragmatist envisions education as primarily experiential in nature. Problematic situations are organized into pedagogical form through the presentation of these "problems" as class projects or class activities. The student finds a solution which is meaningful to him. Subject matter, customarily considered as material which must be learned, has no place in the Pragmatic school. A psychological arrangement of learning experiences overrides any other form of subject matter presentation. The use of the psychological method of learning has been described as the pedagogy of "learning through living" and has become the major of Progressivist educational theory.³⁹

Progressivism. Progressivism is based primarily on the ontological, epistemological, and axiological views of Pragmatism; therefore, exploration of these branches of the Progressivist's philosophy would be repetitious. Progressivism, then, will be commented on in terms of how it touches on educational philosophy.

³⁸John Dewey, Democracy and Education, p. 59.

³⁹Van Cleve Morris, Philosophy and the American School (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1961), pp. 360-65.

The child-centered aim of Progressive education found its source of nourishment in Dewey's view of the educational process as an end in itself. All learning, at any and all levels of instruction, originates with what the Progressivists describe as "felt" needs, interests, or curiosities, and all learners proceed to learn in the same generic way. Real learning, from the Progressivist's viewpoint is not a memorization of facts but stems from a genuinely felt interest or concern of the student. Heavy emphasis is placed upon students working together, an idea which parallels the "shared experience" of the Pragmatist.⁴⁰

The practice of placing emphasis on the unique qualities of the individual creates an analytical as well as an historical break with the older philosophies of Idealism, Realism, and all other views which are chiefly concerned with the ontological aspects of philosophy. Progressivism itself, though part of the basis of a new trend in philosophy of education, began to fall into disrepute by the end of the 1920's. The disciples of the Dewey doctrine abused and misinterpreted his theories regarding the nature of the educative experience to such a degree that

⁴⁰Ibid.

progressive education finally became the object of ridicule of both educators and the public alike.⁴¹

Though some aspects of Pragmatism (and Progressivism) have been retained in the educational philosophy of twentieth century educators, much of this viewpoint has been discarded, or at least modified, in an attempt to fit the less absolutistic, less authoritarian views which have become expressions of belief during the last half of the twentieth century. The Pragmatism of John Dewey appears somewhat naïve in retrospect when compared with the more mature expressions of later pragmatic beliefs. Yet, at its best, educational pragmatism, as practiced in the last thirty or forty years, has some inherent weaknesses, particularly its inability to admit the possibility of tangible goals and, secondly, its scorn of ideals as nothing more than metaphysical abstractions.⁴²

As the older, more traditional philosophies were either rejected or modified, educators, in an attempt to provide a satisfying and more tenable philosophic basis for present-day American education, have developed a more open-ended approach to educational objectives.

⁴¹Hansen, Philosophy for American Education, pp. 235-240.

⁴²M. I. Berger, "John Dewey and Progressive Education Today," School and Society, 87 (March 28, 1959), 142.

C. Current Trends in Educational Philosophies

Many of the world's most renowned philosophical thinkers have been concerned with philosophy of education; indeed, for Plato and Dewey philosophy of education occupied an important place in philosophical thought. In fact, Dewey once suggested that "philosophy may even be defined as the general theory of education."⁴³ In view of this traditional interest in philosophy of education it is perhaps surprising to find that the area has been neglected by many contemporary philosophers. Many traditionalists have pointed to the influence of Existentialists as a major cause of this lack of interest.⁴⁴

Existentialism. Although the intellectual origins of modern Existentialism can be traced to Sor en Kierkegaard, its "newness" as a twentieth century philosophic outlook limits its usefulness as the basis for an educational philosophy; nevertheless, Existential thought has created a notable influence on current philosophic trends in education. Existentialists, per se, have primarily concerned themselves with the problems of politics, institutions, and social order--problems which twentieth

⁴³Dewey, Democracy and Education, p. 328.

⁴⁴Fred A: Westphal, The Activity of Philosophy (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1969), pp. 32-36.

century society in general, and educators in particular, must attempt to solve, for education has become completely social in practice and outlook.⁴⁵

Traditional philosophies share the common assumption that the essence of man occurred before his existence, i.e., the idea of man preceded his creation or existence. From the Platonic viewpoint, the Idea of Man would be possible, even if man himself were not visible. The Existentialist reverses this priority claiming that man's existence in the world is obvious; it is his essence which he attempts to discover through the process of defining himself as he matures. In sum, man is committed to existence and confronted with ultimate choices for which he must take responsibility. Hence, for the Existentialist reality rests within the self and, through the power of responsible choice, man decides who he is and what he is and, by extension, what reality is. The ontological viewpoint of the Existentialist thus presents an effect of "open-endedness," and it is this quality of contingency which has provided a basis for many new ideas in contemporary educational practices and beliefs.⁴⁶

⁴⁵Morris, Philosophy and the American School, pp. 73-80. See also Rolf Muus, "Existentialism and Psychology," Educational Theory, 6 (January, 1956), 135-153.

⁴⁶Ibid., pp. 165-175.

The Existentialist's epistemological views are inextricably intertwined with his ontological principles, i.e., each man is his own judge and jury in his attempt to arrive at epistemological and ontological judgments. The basis for the Existentialist's judgments appears rather nebulous because of the central metaphysical concept of Existentialism itself, that is, the priority of existence over matter; indeed, it is the element of personal choice which dictates each individual's commitment to some theory of knowledge. Each man, then, is his own ultimate point of origin for his particular epistemology.⁴⁷

The Existentialist's method of knowing can not be precisely defined and is perhaps better described as an awareness or a feeling which an individual has. George Kneller describes Existentialist knowledge as intuitive and composed of that which ". . . exists in the individual's consciousness and feelings, as a result of his experiences and the projects he adopts in the course of his life. . . ." The individual is responsible for his own knowledge, because

⁴⁷H. J. Blackman, Six Existentialist Thinkers (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, Ltd., 1952), pp. 127-131. See also Bertrand Russell, The Problems of Philosophy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1959).

that knowledge is his alone, and "the validity of knowledge is determined by its value to the individual."⁴⁸

From the standpoint of axiology, Existentialism is primarily a value theory, i.e., a philosophy based on man's exercise of choice--choice for which he alone is responsible. The far-reaching effects which this kind of thinking has had on current educational practices are subtle, but definite.⁴⁹

Existential philosophy has had little impact on the field of education; nevertheless, many recent changes in curriculum design and teaching approaches reflect quite clearly the axiological doctrine of Existentialism. For example, one finds an increased emphasis on rapport between student and instructor, on spontaneity in the teaching-learning process, and on freedom of action and life style in educational institutions. Great stress is placed on non-specific learnings and non-structured curricula has lessened the emphasis formerly placed on the intellectual as opposed to the non-intellectual types of learning experiences.⁵⁰

⁴⁸George Kneller, Existentialism and Education (New York: Philosophical Library, 1959), p. 59. See also John P. Strain, Modern Philosophies of Education (New York: Random House, Inc., 1971), pp. 470-490.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Alvin Toffler, Future Shock (New York: Random House, Inc., 1970), pp. 405-411. See also John P. Strain, Modern Philosophies of Education (New York: Random House, Inc., 1971), pp. 470-490.

The open-ended approach to educational instruction and curriculum has affected not only the practices but also the philosophy of education. The effect is especially noticeable among the large group of philosophers who are broadly described as proponents of "philosophical analysis."

Analytic Philosophy. In recent years a revolution has occurred in the philosophy of education as a result of the introduction of the technique of linguistic (or conceptual) analysis. Linguistic, or analytic, philosophy is primarily an activity of criticism or clarification as opposed to the older, traditional, speculative, or metaphysical philosophy. This leading movement of twentieth century philosophic thought is distinguished, not by its specific philosophical theses, but by its conception of the entire philosophical pursuit. The analytic philosopher is not a moralist, nor does he pretend to have special expertise in this area. The philosopher is an analyst, although not in the same sense as is a scientist; instead, he seeks to discover the nature of and justification for the basic principles that underlie human inquiry.⁵¹

Analytic philosophy is an unusual philosophy because it claims no subject matter as its own. Those philosophers

⁵¹ Steven M. Cahn, The Philosophical Foundations of Education (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1970), pp. 368-372.

who hold with the linguistic point of view assert that the main function of philosophy is not to expound upon the epistemological, ontological, and axiological problems of the universe, but rather to clarify the language which is employed in the discussion of these matters.⁵²

The analytic philosopher holds no brief for any definite, prescriptive, social philosophy which he would apply to educational objectives; however, the analytic philosopher does have definite views about education--views which he prefers to hold separate from his philosophy.

~~Analytic~~ philosophy is concerned only with the analysis of the concept of "education" and such related concepts as "teaching," "learning," and "knowledge." Much emphasis is placed upon detecting ambiguity in word meaning and in re-defining concepts.⁵³

Reginald D. Archambault in his introduction to Philosophical Analysis and Education describes the analytical philosophy of education as a reaction to the older, more traditional philosophies of education which were concerned with ethics and aesthetics as a part of educational theory and practice. For the analytic philosopher, subject matter is of secondary importance; it is the logical analysis of

⁵²Wolfe Mays, "Linguistic Analysis and the Philosophy of Education," Educational Theory, 20 (Winter, 1970), 269-284.

⁵³Ibid.

the language used in examining the subject matter which is of primary importance.⁵⁴

It is not that analytic philosophers regard questions about the aims of education as unimportant. In truth, they believe that these questions are so important that they can not be answered by philosophers exclusively; the philosopher as philosopher is no more cognizant of the aims of education than is any other individual. According to the analytic philosopher's viewpoint, all philosophers may have opinions on these matters, but these matters do not constitute a distinctive field of inquiry, a prime requisite of philosophy.⁵⁵

A brief glance at two analytic philosophers, Daniel J. O'Connor and Alfred J. Ayer, each of whom has formulated his own conception of analytic philosophy of education, offers examples of the current trend of educational philosophy.

O'Connor defines the philosophy of education as "those problems of philosophy that are of direct relevance to educational theory." In response to those who describe

⁵⁴Reginald D. Archambault, Philosophical Analysis and Education (New York: Humanities Press, 1965), pp. 1-4. See also Maxine Greene, Teacher as Stranger (Belmont, California: Wadsworth Publishing Company, Inc., 1973), pp. 7-8.

⁵⁵Cahn, The Philosophical Foundations of Education, pp. 386-372.

the content of analytic philosophy as nothing more than pointless arguments about the meanings of words, O'Connor retorts that anyone who has even the slightest acquaintance with philosophical thinking "knows that the outcome of such seemingly trivial enquiries has a determining influence on our philosophizing about God and human destiny. . . . Thus the problems of philosophy of education, if pressed far enough, become the traditional problems of philosophy."⁵⁶

Alfred J. Ayer, an equally ardent proponent of analytic philosophy, affirms the importance of employing precise terminology. The traditional philosophies are couched in language forms which are no longer adequate for the accurate expression of ideas; analytic philosophy turns to the interrelationship of subjects and predicates in sentences as the key to philosophical problems. A subject-predicate relationship is, of course, found in every sentence, but it becomes of crucial importance when those sentences or propositions, as the analytic philosopher prefers to call them, purport to give man knowledge of the world around him. If the predicate is contained in the meaning of the subject, then the proposition is true by definition. The predicate of a proposition does not produce

⁵⁶Daniel J. O'Connor, Introduction to the Philosophy of Education (New York: Philosophical Library, 1957), pp. 14-15, 139-140.

new knowledge, but rather it elaborates on the meaning of the subject. Ayers offers the following example of an analytic proposition: "two plus two equals four"; obviously that bit of knowledge is not new. However, on closer analysis the predicate can be found in the meaning of the subject, i.e., "four is one of the meanings of 'two plus two.'"⁵⁷

This line of argument eventually leads to the analytic philosopher's main thesis; the meaning of a proposition must be found in its method of verification. If it has no method of verification, it has no meaning. Therefore, concludes Ayer, the traditional philosophies are pseudo-propositions because they have no method of verification. Philosophical disputes are fruitless because few sentences in these philosophies can pass the analytic test for meaning. The task of philosophy is not to build grand systems of the mind, but rather "to elicit the consequences of our linguistic usage."⁵⁸

Analytic philosophy notwithstanding, philosophy has, in a manner of speaking, come full circle. Beginning with the Self in Idealism and continuing to the mechanistic universe of Realism, to the logical apprehension of Being of

⁵⁷ Alfred J. Ayer, Language, Truth, and Logic (2nd ed.; London: Victor Gollancz, Ltd., 1950), pp. 31-42.

⁵⁸ Ibid.

Neo-Thomism and the experiential beliefs of Pragmatism, Existentialism returns to the self of man where all knowing, all intuiting, and all experiencing are ascertained within the private awareness of the individual. The general overall effect which these philosophies have had in the development of various educational philosophies in America has been pointed out, as well as the more specific effects of recent trends in philosophy upon the curriculum of colleges and universities. To narrow this perspective still further and to carry out the specific purposes of this study, the development of the philosophy of general education in higher education and its effect on the place of world literature in the curriculum is the next area to be given consideration.

Chapter III

Development of the General Education Curriculum and the Role of World Literature

A. Survey of General Education Programs

We are living in a privileged age where, as John Donne wrote, not only every man, but every child:

. . . thinkes he hath got

To be a Phoenix, and that there can bee

None of that kinde, of which he is, but hee.¹

Educators, in their anxiety not to thwart native aptitudes, encourage the individual in an in-breeding of his own temperament. Beginning in kindergarten, a relativistic attitude pervades the air of academe and extends through secondary school and into college through the means of the elective system, with specialization as the ultimate crystallization of this approach to education. The old education with its pedantry of authority and

¹John Donne, First Anniversarie.

prescription has been replaced by the new education and its pedantry of individualism.²

Professor Babbitt's remarks, though written shortly after the turn of the century, surprisingly reflect the tenor of current educational policy and belief. Successive generations of educators are the last stronghold of those few educators who wish to provide some semblance of a common universe of discourse for students regardless of their field of specialization.³

Although it has come into common use only in the past few decades, general education is not a new concept. Early prototypes began to appear shortly after World War I. The establishment of general education programs increased in the 1930's, but it was not until the 1940's that the general education movement began to gain acceptance as a possible solution to the problems created by the cafeteria curriculum of higher education. These programs varied as each developed from indigenous conditions; nevertheless, the main thrust of the individual programs contained some common elements. The most important common characteristic was an attempt, whether explicit or implicit, to provide a basic

²Irving Babbitt, Literature and the American College (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Riverside Press, 1908), pp. 88-100.

³Lewis B. Mayhew, ed., General Education: An Account and Appraisal (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1960), pp. 1-24.

core of knowledge fundamental to the education of all students.⁴

The general education movement proclaimed that its unique goal was to educate students for the non-vocational aspects of life, such as worthy use of leisure time, effective citizenship, and effective personal adjustment. In an attempt to achieve their purported goal, general education proponents sought to modify the free elective system through prescribed courses of study. Although the pattern of a general education curriculum varied from a completely prescriptive program like those of the early colleges, to a program in which one-half of the courses were required, to a curriculum with few required courses, the fact remained that a general education program tended to restrict the freedom of the elective system.⁵

In 1946 Earl J. McGrath, then editor of The Journal of General Education, made the pronouncement that a general education movement was under way, ". . . moving across the educational landscape with speed and force."⁶ He predicted that the movement would sweep away not only many

⁴Ibid. See also Lionel Trilling, Beyond Culture: Essays on Literature and Learning (New York: The Viking Press, 1965), pp. 3-30.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Earl J. McGrath, "The General Education Movement," The Journal of General Education, 1 (October, 1946), 3-8.

conventional forms of college education but also would radically change requirements for undergraduate degrees. Extremely dissatisfied with what he considered the inadequacies of the purpose and instruction in institutions of higher learning which had prevailed heretofore, McGrath set forth a definitive statement of general education. "General education," wrote McGrath, ". . . includes that fund of knowledge and beliefs and those habits of language and thought which characterize and give stability to a particular social group [p. 3]." General education is the unifying element of a culture which embraces ". . . the great moral truths, the scientific generalizations, the aesthetic conceptions, and the spiritual values of [a] race, ignorance of which makes men incapable of understanding themselves and the world in which they live [p. 6]."

McGrath's point of view is that general education is not and should not be concerned with the esoteric and highly specialized knowledge of the scholar, but rather with the maximum development of the individual consistent with the general good of society, a development closely related to the vital needs and problems of human beings, in other words, exposure to the past and to the present. Like most general education practitioners of that period McGrath deplores the type of education which bars students from access to a broadened outlook on life and those

"intellectual tastes" which result from a liberal education, and he suggests integrating the subject matter of related disciplines in an effort to combat the stultifying effect of intellectual isolationism, an isolationism caused by the rigid compartmentalization of academic departments. The integration of related disciplines would result in an increased prescription of representative subject matter, an attempt to help the student to see the relationship between learning and life.⁷

The general education movement had a tremendous effect in breaking down traditional thinking with respect to the functions of college instruction. It directed attention to the need to prepare all students for their common role in society, a role in which intelligent understanding and appreciation of the arts and sciences is vital.⁸

From time to time many statements have been issued by educators, setting forth the objectives of general education. These statements, all similar in content, are best epitomized in the report of the President's Commission on Higher Education which defines the aim of general

⁷Ibid. See also Wallace B. Donham, Education for Responsible Living (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1948), pp. 164-185.

⁸H. T. Morse, "The Design and Operation of Programs of General Education," Fifty-first Yearbook, Part 1, General Education (National Society for the Study of Education: University of Chicago, 1952), pp. 341-371.

education as one which would ". . . develop, for the regulation of one's personal and civic life, a code of behavior based on ethical principles and consistent with democratic ideals."⁹ This statement reflects the spirit and critical thinking of those who visualize the general education movement as one which fulfills a basic need in preparing students for responsible, intelligent action in society.

Although the overall effects of the general education movement on institutions of higher learning have been beneficial because of the emphasis placed on preparing students for responsible roles in society, H. T. Morse, Dean of the General College at the University of Minnesota, points out that the proponents of general education need to guard against promoting "wholesale mediocrity" at the expense of developing the special abilities and interests of the gifted. Morse warns educators of the danger in over-emphasizing the diversity of general education and of the possibility that general education could become so diverse and fragmented that it could destroy the very unity in higher education which it seeks to develop. On the other hand, no one single plan for general education curricula is

⁹President's Commission on Higher Education, Higher Education for American Democracy, I, Establishing the Goals (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1947), p. 50.

desired, for in that way lies the rigidity of the earlier college programs. Ideally, the major purpose of general education programs is to develop, through unified diversification, methods of educating students in such a manner that they become informed, active, intelligently critical citizens in a free society.¹⁰

General education programs at the college level began to increase, and by 1948 general education was the new shibboleth of American institutions of higher learning. The immense differences in the resources of various colleges and universities, the differences of training possessed by entering students, the varying aims of schools and other factors made specific agreement on the content of general education courses impossible. Furthermore, general education itself was not then, nor is yet, a matter of content alone; it is an aim, a purpose, a philosophy which may be realized in different ways. General education is a matter of objectives rather than of subjects to be taught;

¹⁰Morse, "The Design and Operation of Programs of General Education." See also General Education in a Free Society, Report of the Harvard Committee (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1945), pp. 42-58.

it is a matter of a total effect to be achieved rather than of methods employed to gain this effect.¹¹

General education should be viewed from three inter-related points of view; the individual to be educated, the means by which he is educated, and society. This important interrelationship formulates the foundation of general education as it seeks to develop in the individual a capacity for understanding his relationship to the physical universe through the media of the physical and natural sciences, to provide an enrichment for meaningful social experiences along with the necessary principles for guiding human relationships, and to cultivate the individual's capacity for aesthetic experiences by encouraging free exercise of the imagination in creative activities in the fine arts, religion, and science. A partial or specialized training is inadequate for equipping an individual with general principles needed for judging the significance of future experiences. General education attempts not only to provide a broad foundation for the individual by helping him to unify and integrate the multiplicity of subject matters and their numerous concomitant facts but also to provide a

¹¹William N. Chambers, "General Education: Philosophy and Patterns," in Current Trends in Higher Education: Official Group Reports of the Fourth Annual National Conference on Higher Education, Chicago, Illinois (Washington, D.C.: National Education Association, Department of Higher Education, 1949), pp. 45-50.

multiplicity of experiences conducive to an enriched, meaningful life. Lastly, general education attempts to transmit to the college student an understanding of the character of the society in which he lives and to develop in him a sense of responsibility which will enable him to contribute intelligently to the construction or reconstruction of that society. General education on the undergraduate level is one step forward in the realization of these aims, but it offers no panacea for all the ills of higher education. Its major goal is to impel students to further exploration in the whole field of knowledge in pursuit of the threefold objectives previously enumerated.¹²

Few educators would quarrel with the notion that these general, broad concepts of general education are an important function of any college program. These concepts are the part of higher education which is considered to be useful and necessary to all students, but any attempts to be more specific lead to immediate disagreement. For example, the adherents of the rational and neo-humanist schools of thought place major emphasis on the selection and organization of content materials. On the other hand, the instrumentalists focus attention on the individual and his

¹²Ibid. See also John P. Wynne, General Education in Theory and Practice (New York: Bookman Associates, 1952), pp. 31-54.

development. Instrumentalists would periodically subject content, method, and objectives to careful examination and revision so that each student might achieve his optimum development as a responsible individual in a democratic society.¹³

A concrete formula, however, implies commitment to particular educational practices, practices which may be unacceptable to one educational philosophy or another; nevertheless, roughly descriptive labels can be placed on at least four educational patterns though some diversity of opinion lies within each grouping.¹⁴

The first and most common pattern of general education is one of group requirements. Under this system, a student is required to take a certain amount of course work in the natural sciences, the social sciences, and the humanities although choices within each field may be provided; however, in some instances group requirement courses may be departmental. Critics of the group system point out that by choosing one course among many

¹³Harold Taylor, "The Philosophical Foundations of General Education," Fifty-first Yearbook of the National Society for the Study of Education: Part I, General Education (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), pp. 20-45.

¹⁴Hoyt Trowbridge, "General Education in the Liberal Arts College," Current Trends in Higher Education: Official Group Reports of the Third Annual National Conference on Higher Education, Chicago, Illinois (Washington, D.C.: NEA Department of Higher Education, 1948), pp. 85-92.

alternatives students lose the advantages of common experience, that such a program focuses on comparatively narrow fields rather than on broad and basic areas of knowledge and, finally, that when all students take the introductory courses specialization takes precedence in the classroom. Critics of the distributional plan further contend that the group requirement practice is only a palliative and does not encourage a truly liberal education.¹⁵

A second pattern of general education is the remedial program. Although few colleges devote their entire program in general education to the correction of deficiencies, most state universities and many private colleges offer some "sub-freshman" courses. Occasionally, these courses are offered in the form of a trial program, often during a summer session, to marginal students who, if they successfully pass the courses, are then permitted to enroll as regular students in the fall.¹⁶

The two remaining patterns of general education are similar in their rejection of the distributional requirement

¹⁵J. J. Oppenheimer, "Curriculum Reconstruction in the College of Liberal Arts, The University of Louisville," What About Survey Courses?, ed. Lamar Johnson (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1937), pp. 130-150.

¹⁶Trowbridge, "General Education in the Liberal Arts College," pp. 86-87.

principle. In both the practical pattern of general education and the cultural pattern of general education the curriculum is conceived as a unified whole and is prescribed for all students. Regarded individually, the concept which stresses practicality provides concrete, non-technical general education courses that are less rigorous than the usual introductory departmental courses. The practical general education program places major emphasis on its relevance to the students' problems and stresses preparation of the students for responsible citizenship and effective social relationships. Educators who strongly believe that a liberal education is by definition philosophical vigorously oppose the practical approach and contend that this kind of program would produce a responsible citizenry--the followers in a democratic society--but that it is not a program suitable for training future leaders in this same society.¹⁷

Programs of the fourth type are cultural or theoretical in nature, and the approach to preparation is indirect, through principle and theory; its aim is to develop the student's general culture. Two major factors distinguish this general education program from the three

¹⁷Walter J. Matherly, "The Program, Organization, and Achievements of Florida's New General College," What About Survey Courses?, ed. Lamar Johnson (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1937), pp. 91-107.

preceding programs; first, interdepartmental team teaching is used, and, secondly, the instructors use masterpieces in the social and natural sciences as well as the "Great Books" in the humanities. Proponents of this pattern contend that this program avoids the narrowness of the typical introductory courses and the lack of depth of the "practical" program. Critics of the theoretical/cultural programs, particularly those programs in the field of natural sciences, doubt that such limitation of material, in this instance the use of original scientific papers, is sufficient to compensate for the thin, broad coverage offered in introductory courses. Plainly, wherever a general education program was introduced into a college curriculum, debates as to its merits, or lack thereof, ensued.¹⁸

The 1950's witnessed the expansion and diffusion of these four kinds of general education programs which had emerged in the previous decade, and, although many educators agreed that a general education program should be a vital segment of a college curriculum, controversy continued to rage in some quarters concerning the possible loss of intellectual rigor in the newer educational trend, a loss inadequately replaced by an attempt to meet the student's

¹⁸ Mayhew, General Education, pp. 70-71.

personal, social, and moral needs as well as his intellectual ones.¹⁹

In 1954, in an address to the American Council on Education, Douglas Bush, a professor of English at Harvard, voiced the thoughts of those educators who were appalled by the drastic changes created by increased enrollments and lowered admission standards. According to Bush, the principle of education for everyone results in education for none, and he cites an editorial in the September 13, 1954, issue of the New York Times as representative of the orthodox acquiescence to the democratic principle of education for all. Acceptance of this principle, says the editor, requires acceptance of the function of education as ". . . primarily social and political rather than purely intellectual." Although the Times acknowledges that broadening the scope of education in this manner means ". . . a down-grading of the learning process . . ."; nevertheless, education is not a privilege restricted to the few, but it is held to be ". . . the democratic right of all."²⁰

¹⁹Judson R. Butler, "What Are the Implications of Present and Future Responsibilities and Opportunities of Higher Education for Programs of General Education?", Current Issues in Higher Education: Proceedings of the Eighth Annual National Conference on Higher Education, Chicago, Illinois (Washington, D.C.: Association for Higher Education, 1953), pp. 157-161.

²⁰New York Times editorial, September 13, 1954.

In response to the Times' praise of the operation of the democratic principle in the field of education, Bush points out that, in his opinion, mass education reflects mass civilization with all its insidious pressures against, what he terms, the minority culture, i.e., the minority who have created and preserved man's cultural heritage.²¹

Although he could offer no panacea for the educational ills which existed during the 1950's, and which he believed would increase, Bush set forth three directives for consideration. First, graduation from high school should not mean automatic admission to college; moreover, the public's misconception that college attendance is a birthright and a necessary badge of respectability should be corrected. Second, administrators should not permit junior colleges to deteriorate into recreational centers for semi-literate students. Last, colleges and universities, in concert with the public, should demand that secondary schools provide stronger programs which emphasize the basic fundamentals, particularly in the areas of English composition and mathematics. These three suggestions, if carried out, would result in a vast improvement in the steadily deteriorating quality of higher education.²²

²¹Douglas Bush, "The Humanities," Educational Record, 36 (January, 1955), pp. 64-69.

²²Ibid. See also Howard M. Jones and others, "On the Conflict Between the Liberal Arts and the 'Schools of Education,'" The ACLS Newsletter, V (1954), 2.

Not all educators, however, agreed with Professor Bush's recommendations for improving the quality of education. Clark Kerr, then Chancellor of the University of California, Berkeley, blamed departmental policies within the colleges and universities rather than the administration policies. In Kerr's opinion, the decline in quality education was caused by the efforts of the humanities as a whole to obtain the prestige bestowed upon the physical and natural sciences. Kerr accused the humanities of attempting to establish itself as an independent, esoteric discipline and of concerning itself with minutiae, a concern which provided a pseudo-scientific shell constructed of the narrow, specialized information with which the sciences concerned themselves, rather than the broad cultural values which are the proper concern of the humanities.²³

Although the decline of quality education remained a controversial issue, the general consensus among educators was that American society would continue to insist on a "democratic" admissions policy in colleges and universities.

Pronouncements and discussions of the appropriateness of the general education programs which were established in the decade of the fifties continued as many

²³"Excerpts from the Panel Discussion by the Problems and Policies Committee," Educational Record, 36 (January, 1955), pp. 70-75.

educators expressed a strong concern for the need for more effective teaching. In the field of the humanities, for example, educators sought materials and techniques which would fit the emerging pattern of student-centered education through methods and materials specifically designed to meet student needs by helping them to develop both ethical and aesthetic values. Organizational patterns varied from those of interdisciplinary offerings to sectional offerings; courses differed in emphasis on the historical, the aesthetic, the philosophical, or the psychological analysis of the chosen materials, but in every instance the humanities programs appeared to focus on relationships: relationships between man's cultural heritage and contemporary problems; relationships between classroom study and actual experiences; relationships among the arts at different levels, including philosophical, aesthetic, and psychological levels. Generally speaking, the decade of the fifties may rightly be described as the decade of experimentation in the field of education, a period in which educators broke the mold of tradition and sought new forms and new methods of instruction in an effort to meet students' needs.²⁴

²⁴Charles Le Clair, "Meeting Student Needs Through the Humanities," Current Issues in Higher Education: Proceedings of the Tenth Annual National Conference on Higher Education, Chicago, Illinois (Washington, D.C.: Association for Higher Education, 1955), pp. 319-323. See also Sidney J. French, ed., Accent on Teaching (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1954), pp. 12-14.

At this point, it is appropriate to examine the role of literature, especially world literature, in the general education programs of the 1940's and 1950's.

B. Introduction of World Literature Courses in to the General Education Curriculum

Literature is a re-creation of life expressed in an imaginative fashion. Its ultimate objective may be to give aesthetic pleasure, or to provide a means of catharsis, or to give instruction. These possibilities are indicative of the substantially eclectic nature of literature and of its importance as a means of vicarious experiences. In true literary works, the specific becomes universal as it transcends its local limitations revealing the common denominator of human differences and similarities. The concrete imagery and powerful characterization of world literature give man the opportunity to overcome his narrow, self-centered interests through imagined participation in the universe, as John Donne writes: "No man is an island entire unto itself. Everyman is a piece of the continent, a part of the main."²⁵

A bit of land or a home, despite its smallness, is a part of the universe, and by the same token all literature is a part of world literature. Therefore, the study of the

²⁵John Donne, Devotions, XVII.

literature of every culture from ancient to modern times is a study of world literature. It is a method of revealing man to himself in the innumerable facets of his personality, and, although anachronisms may reflect differences in fashion, manner, and ideology, they do not destroy its timelessness. Through world literature, man's personal problems take on a universal texture; his loneliness reflects the solitariness of the human universe; the singular accent of his spirit denotes the universal accent of the human spirit in search of order and purpose, and, in spite of his finiteness, man's imaginative horizon can be widened and can transcend empiricism. World literature focuses on man imprisoned by life and searching for a meaningful existence.²⁶

Traditionally, the study of literature has been considered uniquely effective in opening the mind and providing it with illumination, in freeing the mind of prejudices, and in stimulating the mind to greater activity. Although some doubts have been raised by scholars concerning its justification, the classic defense of literary study holds that the study of literature can result in an

²⁶Joseph Remenyi, World Literatures (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1956), pp. 1-15.

improvement in the intelligence of a student, particularly as it affects his moral life.²⁷

As early as 1911, Richard Moulton, a well known scholar and educator, was urging others to include studies of literature, world literature in particular, as a part of general education rather than as specialized offerings. World literature, in Moulton's opinion, contributes more than any single literature can to broadening human sympathies, to stimulating interest in reading, and to developing the ability of the student to discriminate between excellent and poor literature. Moulton considers world literature as an essential part of general education, for it provides the student with a perspective of the whole literary field--a perspective which brings new interest and significance to each particular literature, whereas the study of a single national literature encourages an already inherent provinciality in students.²⁸ Moulton's statements reflect the philosophy of today's proponents for world literature course offerings in general education programs, a philosophy which forms the basis of the rationale for this study.

²⁷ Alfred N. Whitehead, The Aims of Education and Other Essays (1929; rpt. New York: The Free Press, 1967), pp. 1-12.

²⁸ Richard G. Moulton, World Literature and Its Place in General Education (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1921), pp. 441-465. See also William L. Richardson and Jesse M. Owen, Literature of the World (Boston: Ginn and Company, 1922), pp. 1-4.

In some quarters, and in a later era, the feeling prevailed that any involvement of students with literature was better than no involvement. Others insisted that the works of J. D. Salinger or Arthur Miller could do more than the works of Milton to convey subtle, profound thoughts to the students and to give them some comprehension of the complexities of human nature. This particular viewpoint is based on the theory that, if the sensibility of the undergraduate is engaged, the essential purpose of the literature course is accomplished.²⁹

Shortly after World War II, professors of literature became alarmed over the effect that the strong nationalistic tendencies of the war period had wrought upon teaching emphasis. Christian Gauss, who viewed the change of approach to the teaching of literature as divisive and unfortunate, criticized those instructors who emphasized the historical and nationalistic approach to literature rather than the fundamental human traits which transcend all nations and all cultures. Gauss was of the opinion that writers are subject to the influences of their own historical period, but if they are to portray human experiences successfully they, as artists, must transcend the historical

²⁹Lionel Trilling, Beyond Culture: Essays on Literature and Learning (New York: The Viking Press, 1965), pp. 215-253.

process, for the work of art itself is not subject to change.³⁰

Gauss decried the emphasis placed on teaching mainly American literature courses and on teaching them in a fashion which deprived students of the mainsprings of American tradition, i.e., the great literary works of Greece and Rome and of later European cultures which are a part of the American heritage. As Gauss points out, Henry James was not un-American because he learned his art from Balzac, nor was T. S. Eliot guilty of treasonable thoughts because he owed more to Baudelaire, to Dante, and to Sophocles than to Holmes or to Freneau. The professor of literature must, in teaching the masterpieces of world literature, combat the misconception that something foreign in nature is being imposed upon the American student; indeed, the wealth of his cultural heritage is being opened to him, making him acutely aware of his own larger tradition. It is this awareness, through contact with world literature, which can generate a fuller understanding of other nations and other cultures.³¹

A more specific and perhaps clearer picture of the aims, objectives, and methods which were in vogue both prior to and after World War II is provided by a case study of the

³⁰Christian Gauss, "More Humane Letters," PMLA, 60 (December, 1945), 1306-1312.

³¹Ibid.

evolution of a freshman world literature course at Indiana University from 1925 to 1950. This freshman world literature course originated, oddly enough, in the School of Business at the request of the dean of that school who desired that his students have a broader base of humane studies than was possible through the traditional survey of English literature. Six hours of world literature became part of the graduation requirements of the School of Business; other divisions of the university retained the survey of English literature requirement. The world literature course did not gain major acceptance as a group requirement in its initial stages, but, within ten years, enrollment in the world literature course equalled that of the required English survey course and, from 1945 to 1950, twice as many students enrolled in the world literature course as enrolled in the English literature course. Emphasis in the world literature course was placed on literary works which were considered appealing and teachable to freshmen; biographical and historical considerations were deliberately excluded.³²

Three different approaches to world literature were employed: (1) discussion groups who read from an anthology, (2) large group lectures followed by small discussion

³²Philip B. Daglian and Horst Frenz, "Evolution of a World Literature Course," College English, 12 (December, 1950), 150-153.

groups, who used the same anthology as the first group, and (3) discussion groups who read complete books. Within two years of the inception of this threefold approach to teaching world literature, all sections of the course had adopted the complete books method. Student preference dictated this move through a steadily increased sectional enrollment in ensuing semesters.³³

The aims of the course were: (1) to teach the beginning student to read accurately and thoughtfully, (2) to introduce him to some of the literary masterpieces of Western civilization, and (3) to acquaint him with the aesthetic values inherent in various literary types. The selections for the course included such works as the Odyssey, Oedipus the King, Antigone, Henry IV, Part I, Candide, Selected Poems by Browning, Pocket Book of Short Stories, and Crime and Punishment.³⁴

Thus, a world literature course which began as a service offering for a single school changed and developed until it became the only course in beginning literature offered at Indiana University, a course based entirely in the School of Liberal Arts. Despite its unusual origins, the offerings of and the approaches to this particular world

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid.

literature course were typical of literature programs offered in the 1950's, programs which often developed as an integral part of a humanities offering in a general education curriculum.

A specific example of a unique experimental approach to general education via the interdisciplinary method is provided by a program initiated at Culver-Stockton College, a small liberal arts college in northeastern Missouri. Its general education curriculum differed from the more common pattern which limited general education requirements to the freshman and sophomore years. Culver-Stockton general education requirements extended vertically through all four years and included a required humanities course for all juniors and a required course in the social sciences for seniors.³⁵

The humanities course is described in the college bulletin as a course which ". . . attempts to integrate art, music, literature, drama, and philosophy for the student." It is concerned with ". . . the meaning of values as shown in the great interpretations of the past and present." The course extended through two semesters with three hours of credit given for each semester.³⁶

³⁵Culver-Stockton College Bulletin (Bethany, West Virginia: Bethany Press, 1962), p. 74.

³⁶Ibid.

From its inception, team teaching was a vital part of the experiment. Each participating instructor from the departments of art, literature, music, drama, and philosophy was responsible for lectures in his specific area. Discussion groups of approximately fifteen to twenty students met twice weekly as a follow-up to the lectures. Assigned readings along with appropriate supplementary reading lists were provided to the student in conjunction with each lecture. The assigned readings included the Odyssey, The Decameron, Don Quixote, Song of Roland, Oedipus Rex, Antigone, Lysistrata, and The Duchess of Malfi as part of the first semester's study in literature. The second semester included King Lear, Henry IV, Part I, The Tempest, Gargantua and Pantagruel and numerous works of short fiction by both American and European authors.³⁷

The primary purpose of the Humanities 301-302 course is stated in the course syllabus as follows: ". . . to reveal to the student who has had no previous instruction in the fine arts, literature, and drama an overview of this activity of man; to acquaint the student with major works in these fields, leaving him free to form his own judgment of their merits; to give the student some understanding of the importance of the fine arts, literature, and drama in human

³⁷Syllabus of course in "The Humanities" used at Culver-Stockton College, 1962-63, p. 1.

society and a knowledge of some of the influences which affected them; and to arouse his interest in these fields."³⁸

Proponents of general education programs such as the one offered at Culver-Stockton College contended that required interdisciplinary courses in the third and fourth years of study would serve as a means of integrating the specialized, often fragmented bits of knowledge accumulated through a student's major and minor requirements and electives. Furthermore, the required interdisciplinary courses provided not only a unity to the curriculum but also offered the students a common bond of experience in the form of an over-arching educational capstone.³⁹

In a random sampling drawn from three hundred twenty-two colleges and universities in the United States, Paul Dressel and Frances De Lisle, in a comprehensive study, analyzed and described undergraduate curriculum trends during the period 1957-1967. One chapter, which was devoted almost exclusively to a presentation and analysis of nine comprehensive curricular patterns representing both the traditional and the unusual, disclosed the fact that courses in world literature constituted a substantial part of the

³⁸Ibid.

³⁹Paul L. Dressel and Frances H. De Lisle, Undergraduate Curriculum Trends (Washington, D.C.: American Council on Education, 1969), pp. 46-70.

literature requirement in the humanities courses as well as in a major portion of the sectional offerings.⁴⁰

Additional confirmation of the emphasis on world literature in the undergraduate curriculum in the decade of the fifties abounds in a collection of articles edited by James A. Fisher which describes the humanities programs in such institutions of higher education as Florida State University, St. John, Southwestern at Memphis, and Michigan State University. The original idea underlying all such courses is perhaps best expressed as a study of ". . . masterpieces of world literature from the Homeric epics to the present day which have value in western culture."⁴¹

It is interesting to note that few, if any, programs included Oriental literature as part of their studies during this period, but, regardless of parameters and methodologies, educators seemed to agree on the value of world literature as a course of study.

A most illuminating insight into the power of literature is provided by those scholars who claim that literature, particularly modern literature, has replaced religion and, in some instances, is considered as a kind of religion. Graham Hough, for example, believes that

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹James A. Fisher, ed., The Humanities in General Education (Dubuque: William C. Brown Company, 1960), p. 213.

literature, especially poetry, provides the foundations of feeling, conduct, and belief for those who have no other source. Furthermore, the student demands that literature have a close, immediate relationship to his present experience, a literature that delves into such topics as teen-age morality, juvenile delinquency, and the compensatory mythologies of modern urban living. Few students, through choice, have read Dickens or Hardy, but many have read Catcher in the Rye. Hough regards such choices as indicative of the ordinary reader's neglect of the literary experience of the past and of his increasing demand for more timely inspiration and enlightenment.⁴²

Hough's stance is that literature should form some part of general education at the undergraduate level and that the claim for literature as a discipline in a strict, professional sense should be abandoned. On the other hand, he warns educators to avoid the temptation to fill in the gaps of literary education by twisting it into a discipline that is foreign to its real nature.⁴³

Although he is a professor at Cambridge University, Hough has high praise for the American system of higher education, praise which he qualifies with the comment that

⁴²Graham Hough, The Dream and the Task: Literature and Morals in the Culture of Today (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1963), pp. 15-16.

⁴³Ibid.

it is neither the content nor the methods, but the system of higher education which he believes is superior to England's universities. He states specifically that, because the general education curriculum provides "some tincture of literature [p. 15]" as part of a student's general education, American institutions of higher education afford some measure of counterattack against what Hough terms as "subservience to irrelevant technological aims."⁴⁴

C. The Changing General Education Scene

Few major changes occurred in the general education programs in American colleges and universities until the Russian Sputnik electrified the world and created panic in the minds of Americans. The scientific and technological explosion which followed the Russian feat wrought drastic changes in the field of education, changes which over the decade of the sixties created an imbalance in educational development.

Public concern and heightened interest in higher education brought a demand for "quality education"--a commonly used, though sadly abused, term. Concerted pressures toward specialization resulted in acute curtailment of liberal arts programs. Specialized faculty members

⁴⁴Ibid.

spawned specialized students who, in turn, achieved their specialization quickly and thoroughly. Administrators, too, responded to the public outcry by providing tests in overwhelming numbers, tests which measured academic ability, test-taking ability, and problem-solving ability.⁴⁵

The single overwhelming problem faced by the institutions of higher learning was that of mass education. Higher education was not originally intended for mass consumption, but, rather, it was designed for the perpetuation of the elite, a small, select, homogeneous group who held the common attitude that the tradition behind the subject content and the values inherent in it were taken for granted. None of these values were in themselves commercially useful; the purpose of higher education was not primarily to prepare the student for a job but to enable him to fit into a society in which education played a major role.⁴⁶

As the press of numbers continued, many institutions of higher learning sought ways to improve educational

⁴⁵James G. Rice, "General Education: Present Condition," Journal of General Education, 14 (July, 1962), 79-92. See also Joseph J. Schwab, "Science and Civil Discourse," Journal of General Education, 9 (October, 1956), 132-143.

⁴⁶Christopher Jenks and David Riesman, The Academic Revolution (New York: Doubleday and Company, Inc., 1969), pp. 1-8. See also Robert J. Havighurst, American Higher Education in the 1960's (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1960), pp. 52-53.

benefits. Several large institutions, including Indiana University and Florida State University, established small autonomous colleges, each with its own faculty and student body, as separate units of the parent university as one means of meeting the problem of maintaining quality education. Innovations such as learning resources centers and the use of computer technology in teaching were adopted. Curtailment and often abolition of general education programs occurred increasingly as the demand for specialization mounted. Through sheer numbers, great force was brought to bear on curriculum revision as student unrest played havoc with both administrative and educational policies, policies which fluctuated from one semester to the next in accordance with the dictates of vociferous student groups.⁴⁷

In assessing the developments of higher education in the decades of the fifties and sixties, it becomes apparent that existing programs in colleges and universities have evolved as a result of rapidly expanding knowledge, the pressures of the immediate environment, the needs of American society, and the unending demands of students.

⁴⁷Lewis B. Mayhew, Contemporary College Students and the Curriculum (Atlanta: Southern Regional Education Board, 1969), pp. 1-20. See also Samuel Baskin, ed., Higher Education: Some Newer Developments (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, 1965), pp. 318-332.

No longer is the classroom limited to four walls. International student exchange programs, international tours conducted for college credit, summer internships in other countries and similar methods of gaining knowledge through actual experience have developed a new approach to education. These new programs create an even greater need for world literature courses which can provide a background for the many cultures with which the student may come in contact. The American student can develop a better understanding of the peoples of other nations if he can see how, through its literary works, each country's cultural past has determined its present.

As a citizen of the world, the American student will be better prepared to meet his responsibilities in his future role in society if he has some knowledge of other cultures. Because of the demands of modern living, the American student tends to seek pleasure and knowledge only in the immediate and parochial. Through the study of world literature, he can discover that his emotions, desires, and needs are not uniquely his, but are universal. Thus, a common bond that unites all mankind is strengthened, a bond which transcends differences of race, creed, and culture.

CHAPTER IV

World Literature in General Education Programs in Colleges Today

A. Review of Recent Literature

One of the consequences of rapid growth in higher education in this country has been an erosion of consensus concerning what constitutes a good education. A number of factors have contributed to this lack of agreement, but the major area of disagreement centers around that part of the curriculum designated as general education.¹

The commonly held belief that a curriculum can be devised which can be kept relevant to the ever-changing present is an illusion. The interests of one four-year generation are not the interests of the next. This is true not only of popular music but also of literature, politics, and social crises. If universities wish to avoid the

¹Clark Kerr, "Policy Concerns for the Future," The Expanded Campus, ed. Dychman W. Vermilye (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., Publishers, 1972), pp. 3-21.

epithet "educational yo-yo," they must reject all "relevance" of the obvious sort, i.e., the relevance of instant utility.²

Curricular relevance has polarized higher education to the extent that the relevance of a course or the lack of it often serves as the basis for curricular reform. Recently, general education courses have received much adverse criticism as a result of student demand for educational utilitarianism, a demand to which the faculty and administrators of a number of universities have given eager compliance. Lewis B. Mayhew, who views the general education component of the curriculum as providing a common set of experiences necessary for communication purposes and as a means of sharing the same culture, proposes that the deciding factor concerning the appropriateness of general education requirements be based on the usefulness of each required course to those who are living in the "last third of the 20th century."³

Mayhew's pragmatic attitude on this point, one which differs from his earlier stance, reflects the students' own

²Jacques Barzun, The American University (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1968), pp. 70-72.

³Lewis B. Mayhew, Contemporary College Students and the Curriculum (Atlanta: Southern Regional Education Board, 1969), p. 71.

insistence on operational utility. Coupled with this attitude is Mayhew's desire to establish a model curriculum which would coordinate student demand for various utilitarian experiences with certain student competencies which are the obligation of educators, i.e., the ability to read, speak, write, and listen "with some sophistication in subjects of concern to people living in the last half of the 20th century."⁴ For example, a course in literature in Mayhew's proposed curriculum would offer students a wide range of literary materials including those in contemporary idioms whose primary purpose would be one of helping the students to expand their "impulse lives."⁵ Additionally, a one-semester course in writing and an elective course chosen from a limited area would meet the general education needs of the curriculum satisfactorily. A curriculum based on tradition and faculty members' interests is no longer viable for Mayhew or for others who visualize a flexible curriculum which will reflect student needs and desires, regardless of the type of institution or of individual academic ability.⁶

⁴Ibid., p. 74.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Lewis B. Mayhew and Patrick J. Ford, Changing the Curriculum (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., Publishers, 1971), pp. 166-172. See also Samuel E. Kellams, "Students and the Decline of General Education," Journal of General Education, 24 (January, 1973), 229.

On the other hand, Mayhew's viewpoint is not wholly representative of all who are involved in curriculum making per se or in pedagogical methods. Doubts still persist in some minds, yet, even the most stalwart defender of the traditional curriculum acknowledges that the relationship of college education to modernity is no longer an open question. These educators do not quarrel with the assumption of most curriculum constructs that the real subject of all study is the modern world, that the justification of all study is its practical, relevant immediacy, or that the true purpose of all study is to aid the student in feeling at ease in and in control of the modern world. Rather, it is the belief of these few, and indeed they are in the minority, that too much comes within the purview of academe. For example, the study of works of art of earlier eras are interpreted from an advantageously distant perspective in time, but, with 20th century works of art, university study tends to speed up the process which creates a classic work to the degree that the study becomes non-academic in terms of vivaciousness and responsiveness.⁷

Within the same context it is noteworthy that a growing number of professors, through fear that reality-loving students may identify their instructors as part of

⁷Lionel Trilling, Beyond Culture: Essays on Literature and Learning (New York: The Viking Press, 1965), pp. 3-10.

the older, more prosaic image of academe, attempt to shatter this unflattering image by dealing with the classics outside their historical context, transforming them through sociological and psychological interpretations into modern existential experiences. Of this number, a few admit wryly that a twinge of conscience plagues them occasionally, but with the typical proletarian spirit of the times they, too, join the mainstream of the currently popular existential philosophy with its relevancy to contemporary man, his alienations, his angst.⁸

In some quarters, there is the feeling that general education has been vitiated through heavy reliance on discussion for its own sake rather than for seeking answers, a method which encourages students to adopt a hypercritical attitude toward any and all ideals or commitment to them. Skepticism has a recognizable value, but it is only useful so long as it does not become an end in itself. The discussion method, once considered superior to lecturing, often degenerates into the so-called "bull-session" where a student's originality of viewpoint or bright, impulsive dissent suffices to validate his shallow off-hand responses,

⁸George L. Groman, "A Sociological Classification of Literary Types," CEA Chap Book (Nashville: George Peabody College for Teachers, 1972), pp. 24-28.

responses applauded by a tolerant faculty who prefer to foster exuberance instead of logic.⁹

The current generation's rejection of the authority of scholarship, knowledge, and culture has shaken many professors' confidence in their own moral and intellectual strength. So fierce is the students' challenge that some academicians no longer believe they have a right to define a curriculum or to set standards of performance. Professors often regard with contempt or amusement the old belief that there are qualities of mind which can be realized from a college education.¹⁰

The result of this lack of conviction is the moral and intellectual void which Yeats described: "Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold; Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world. . . . The best lack all conviction, while the worst are full of passionate intensity."¹¹ Consequently,

⁹Jacques Barzun, "Humanities, Pieties, Practicalities, Universities," Seminar Reports, I, prepared by the Seminar on General and Continuing Education in the Humanities at Columbia University (November 14, 1973), p. 8.

¹⁰Martin Trow, "Reflections on the Transition from Mass to Higher Education," Daedalus (Winter, 1970), 1-40. See Bruce Deering, "General Education and Radical Social Change," Journal of General Education, 24 (October, 1972), 139-140. See also Daniel Bell, "A Second Look at General Education," Seminar Reports, I, prepared by the Seminar of General and Continuing Education in the Humanities at Columbia University (December 7, 1973), pp. 5-6.

¹¹William Butler Yeats, "The Second Coming."

many colleges have yielded to student demand for operational utility by abandoning the two-year general education requirements.¹²

Yet, despite the emphasis on utilitarianism in American society, man's search for the survival of spirit finds expression in rituals, in poetry, in drama, and other art forms. All great art is revolutionary because it expresses the truth of man's existence, an expression usually in conflict with the purposes and transitory forms of a given society. Unfortunately, however, modern industrial society has converted man's last outposts of escape from practicality into items for common consumption. This is not to say that easy access to classical recorded music or inexpensive editions of the masterpieces of world literature made possible through modern technology destroys the cultural value of the works themselves; indeed, for a small minority, this encounter with art, music, and literature is a genuine experience. For the majority, however, "culture," like expensive cars, private swimming pools, and membership in the local country club, becomes a status symbol, and one is reminded of Prufrock's world in which ". . . the women come and go, talking of Michelangelo."¹³

¹²Charles E. Silberman, Crisis in the Classroom: The Remaking of American Education (New York: Random House, 1970), pp. 373-411.

¹³Thomas Stearns Eliot, "The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock."

In this fashion, all works of art are reduced to the level of non-artistic commodities.¹⁴

In literature as form and in language as medium lies the solution for both students and professors. An awareness of language as symbolic is the first step toward becoming acquainted with literature; the second step is a recognition that not only Western culture but all cultures are a treasury of universally-held concepts. For example, though reflecting only Western culture, the figure of Ulysses as seen through the eyes of Homer, Dante, Tennyson, and James Joyce symbolizes the agonizing universal conflict of the human spirit. Language and the arts are forms by which man expresses his humanity and, without the ability and imagination required to conceptualize his world and his relationship to others, man loses his humaneness and becomes less than human. Literature as a storehouse of these rich and varied concepts is justification in itself for the study of all literature.¹⁵

A few educators, in the hope of providing students with an education for human competence in the age of

¹⁴Erich Fromm, The Revolution of Hope: Toward A Humanized Technology (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1968), pp. 67-74.

¹⁵John C. Hodges, "Truth vs. Beauty: Language and Literature in an Articulate Society," reprinted by John H. Fisher, English Journal, 62 (February, 1973), 205-214.

technology, have turned to the "holistic" approach in curriculum planning. To effect this kind of education, a curriculum must offer the combined knowledge and experiences of the arts and the sciences including explicit technological studies, insights which will assist the student to understand the past, the present, and to envision the future, not only rationally but emotionally and intuitively, that is, he must grasp it holistically.¹⁶ The holistic emphasis requires a continuity in the student's education that is vital to his total growth and that remains perpetually relevant to any and all of man's ethics or social systems. Holistic learning centers about man's enduring humanity. "The holistic approach is as relevant to the twentieth century cybernetic man as it was to the humanistic teachings of Erasmus."¹⁷

Holism in itself is not a complete systematic philosophy, a doctrinal credo, or a dogma, but rather it is a method of visualizing problems, a general intellectual way of approaching their solutions. René Dubos, a leading laboratory investigator in the field of biology, provides an

¹⁶Maxwell H. Goldberg, Design in Liberal Learning (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., Publishers, 1971), pp. 54-64. See also Richard J. Wrothen, "The Changing World of English," ADE Bulletin, 32 (February, 1972), 38-44.

¹⁷René Dubos, "Toward a Humanistic Biology," American Scholar, 34 (Winter, 1965), 188-189. See also René Dubos, So Human an Animal (New York: Scribner's, 1968).

extended exposition of the holistic approach in his attack on science's typical, fragmented approach to man's problems. He points out that science does not concern itself with all of the ramifications of the complex and sensitively interacting systems which comprise human societies and cultures but tends to represent them as totalities. Failure to consider men as individuals with differing hopes and needs has always been a major weakness in the scientist's single-minded pursuit of new information.¹⁸

Maxwell Goldberg, author of Design in Liberal Learning, who also believes in the holistic approach to education, describes a model curriculum designed to provide holistic competence for students in institutions of higher education as one which should contain at least one basic course devoted to synthesizing humanistic studies through a holistic approach. He recommends that a course of this kind be offered once at the freshman level and again at the senior level. These courses would serve, first, as a means of initiating the student into integrative liberal learning for human competence and, secondly, as a means of pointing up the interrelationships of specialized fields in a capstone experience.¹⁹

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Goldberg, p. 62.

It is of singular interest that one can find the fusion of disciplines in an ever-growing collection of anthologies which stress the interrelationship of the humanities, science and technology, a development which indicates that educators are becoming increasingly aware of the need to stimulate in the student the habit of interdisciplinary transaction and a mind set toward a holistic concept of learning and thinking. The use of this approach, particularly with literary works, enables students to sense what Alfred North Whitehead describes as an architecture of purposes, i.e., telic patterns of wholeness.²⁰ The utilitarian qualities of technology's contributions to society must be tempered by the humane concerns of men in that society or a mindless, rootless existence for all men will eventually prevail.

Theodore de Bary, vice-president for academic affairs at Columbia University, agrees fully with Goldberg's holistic approach to the college curriculum, but de Bary does not recommend limiting humanistic studies to one or two basic courses designed to synthesize the area of the humanities. De Bary prefers to have the process of general education extend beyond the undergraduate level and into the graduate and professional schools. The purposes, scope, and

²⁰ Alfred North Whitehead, The Aims of Education and Other Essays (1929; rpt. New York: The Free Press, 1967), p. 93.

content of a general education program should be viewed in terms of the perennial concerns of human life and the complexities of those concerns in the contemporary world and in terms of those disciplines which may contribute to an understanding of them.²¹

Up to this point, de Bary's view of the parameters of a general education program does not depart substantially from the commonly accepted view, insofar as scope, purpose, and content are concerned. The major thrust of de Bary's thesis, however, is his proposal to extend general education to include the graduate level and/or professional study, an action which would allot more time to general education. The extended period of general education provides additional opportunities for students to internalize earlier acquired knowledge since the need to understand oneself and his relationship to the world is not limited to the undergraduate group.²²

De Bary considers scholarly research and general education as interdependent, particularly in the field of the humanities, for, unless education successfully conveys the meaning and value of the humanities in contemporary terms and unless new generations succeed to their cultural inheritance, the values which sustain cultural freedom and

²¹Theodore de Bary in an address, "General Education and the University Crisis," presented at the University Center for Rational Alternatives Conference, Sept. 21, 1973.

²²Ibid.

support disciplined scholarly research are not passed on. The growing indifference of today's student toward engaging in methodical study as well as his open hostility toward rationality as a fundamental cultural value creates an educational atmosphere which places practicality above cultural achievements. The Maoist approach appeals strongly to a generation of students whose debased education no longer sustains cultural values in relation to contemporary life."²³

The current trend toward irrationalism and mysticism, toward a devaluing of reason and a complete indifference to the cultural and historical heritage of the past can be traced to an "overdose of critical skepticism" administered by a skeptical, dissenting majority of college faculty members.²⁴ To counteract this negative attitude, students must be increasingly exposed to the experience and wisdom of other world cultures and to a recognition of the neglected values in our own pluralistic culture, a method which could "infuse new blood" into the traditional separate disciplines approach to the teaching of literature.²⁵

²³Ibid. See also Charles E. Silberman, "The Re-making of American Education," New Teaching, New Learning, ed. G. Kerry Smith (San Francisco: American Association for Higher Education: Jossey-Bass, Inc., Publishers, 1971), pp. 227-333.

²⁴Jacques Barzun, "Humanities, Pieties, Practicalities, Universities," p. 88.

²⁵De Bary.

At no point in the history of higher education has "classroom culture" seemed less congruent with the tempo and culture of human experience.²⁶ Students do not respond enthusiastically; indeed, they often do not respond at all to classroom discussions of the mores and values of other societies and older civilizations as revealed in literature, an attitude which is basically provincial and emotionally self-limiting. Through the special powers which deepen his awareness of humankind, a student can find the liberating knowledge that ". . . man has always made and continues to make his world with words," words which can transform the student into a perceptive human being ". . . responsive to the multi-dimensionality of experience, intellectually and emotionally supple."²⁷

World literature offers itself as an intellectual discipline concerned with appearance and reality, with truth, and particularly with the truth of the self, the conditions of its existence, its development, its survival. The function of literature is to make its readers aware of the self and the relation of the self to a culture. Generally speaking, the qualities of a culture are found in the individual's attempt to make a meaningful life, to face the fears of the inner as well as the outer world, and to

²⁶Robert Foulke, "The Undergraduate Curriculum: A Position Paper," CEA Chap Book (Nashville, Tenn.: George Peabody College, 1972), p. 50.

²⁷Sidney J. French, ed., Accent on Teaching (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1954), pp. 35-42.

establish the pieties and duties which make up the life of the group and the individual. Contemplation of these various aspects of a culture must surely evoke sympathetic responses from the student; indeed, without a subjective sympathy and admiration, any culture is a closed book to the student. Not only must a student make a willing suspension of disbelief in the assumptions of cultures which are foreign to him, he must also develop a feeling that they are somehow of a justifiable nature, a feeling which can result in an improvement in the intelligence of the student, purging his mind of prejudices, making his mind free and active.²⁸

Up to this point, the problems which face general education programs today have been from a theoretical standpoint. Consideration must now be given to the current practices taking place in general education, particularly in the area of the humanities and especially in the literature offerings at the lower division level.

B. Review of Current Practices

The bulk of recent literature concerning higher education paints glowing pictures of the effective changes, experimentations, and curricular innovations that are taking

²⁸Trilling, Beyond Culture, pp. 102-118.

place in numerous institutions of higher learning; however, some skeptics suggest that much of the literature is in reality mere image building and that any resemblance between such praise and actual curricular-instructional processes may be coincidental.²⁹

Joseph Axelrod, long a critic of those English departments who cling tenaciously to the notion that they are preparing only English majors and potential Ph.D.'s, challenges them to offer more and better courses for the non-major,³⁰ the student whom Harold Martin places in the commonwealth of the university, the student who wishes to study the literature of many cultures as a broadening humane experience.³¹

In an effort to define recurrent patterns in undergraduate programs and to identify the major concerns of college English departments, Thomas W. Wilcox conducted an extensive survey in 1967 and 1968. The survey, followed by

²⁹Joseph Axelrod, "The Curriculum," The Troubled Campus: Current Issues in Higher Education, ed. G. Kerry Smith (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., Publishers, 1970), pp. 195-196.

³⁰Joseph Axelrod, "New Patterns in Undergraduate Education: Emerging Curriculum Models for the American Colleges," New Dimensions in Higher Education, ed. G. Kerry Smith (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., Publishers, 1967), pp. 18-22.

³¹Harold C. Martin, "A College President Speaks Out," ADE Bulletin (October, 1967), 18-22.

three years of close investigation, was limited to colleges and universities offering four-year programs in English. The junior and community colleges were excluded from the survey to keep the compass of the survey of manageable size.³²

Of the 1,320 colleges and universities offering four-year programs in English in 1969, Wilcox mailed a thirty-nine page questionnaire to a scientifically selected random sample of 300 departments of English. The instrument, devised by Wilcox and an advisory committee, was designed to elicit information on matters which earlier interviews by Wilcox had shown to be of greatest importance to departments of English. Results of Wilcox's survey revealed that 87 percent of all English departments polled had made few, if any, changes in their structures in the past twenty or thirty years. Course offerings which emphasize the study of women in literary works, courses in black literature, and in the film appear to be the only recent additions to the traditional curriculum and even the interest in black literature has begun to wane.³³

From interviews conducted prior to his survey, Wilcox concludes that most of the problems confronting

³²Thomas W. Wilcox, The Anatomy of College English (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Publishers, 1973), p. x.

³³Ibid., pp. 156-157.

English instructors today can be reduced to three major concerns: to reconcile the humanist tradition with the standardization of departmental requirements; to determine what constitutes good teaching of English; and to define and to defend English as a discipline.³⁴ In their efforts to cope with these areas of concern, instructors in undergraduate classes are adopting such practices as seminars for freshmen and sophomores, special topics courses, and provisions for minority groups.³⁵

Consistent with this trend toward individualized study for undergraduates is a view of teaching which is becoming more widely endorsed, a view termed by F. Parvin Sharpless as a kind of existential pedagogy which he characterizes as assuming that:

. . . to learn is to develop, to become, to fulfill one's potential, and the means to these ends are not discipline and restraint, but freedom, encouragement, love. Under these terms the teacher neither lectures nor prescribes, because his "truth" is experiential, growing out of situation and context, out of the crossing in time of teacher, student and work of art. In his students and in himself he values originality, imagination, and evidence of growth. In the classroom he values engagement; his aim is to unsettle the perceptual pattern of the student, but not to prescribe a new one. . . . He considers that only when

³⁴Ibid., p. 162.

³⁵F. Parvin Sharpless, "Reflections on the College Teaching of English," College English, 29 (October, 1967), 32-39.

students are involved in a kind of spontaneous excitement of learning will the class justify itself.³⁶

The major pitfall in this unorthodox practice is obvious. The cult of "immediacy" may blind not only students but instructors as well to everything that is not present and readily grasped. As a safeguard against this danger, links between the literature of the past and the present must be stressed, and the writings of men of all cultures must be examined.

In an effort to particularize a specific portion of the broad scope of Wilcox's survey, this writer, in the early months of 1973, conducted a survey of the English departments of the two-year and four-year colleges in the state of Tennessee, both in the private and the public sectors. The survey was designed to elicit information which would not only define the parameter of the term "world literature" in the views of Tennessee scholars and teachers but would also indicate the extent to which courses in world literature were offered at the freshman and sophomore levels as part of general education requirements. This smaller scale survey cuts across the three major concerns listed by Wilcox and presents an in-depth picture which his larger survey could not produce.

³⁶Ibid., p. 34. See also E. H. Johansson, Lester J. Marks, and William Holmes, "Undergraduate Programs in English," ADE Bulletin (May, 1971), 27-30.

Not only did this writer attempt to determine the extent of world literature course offerings in colleges and universities in Tennessee but also to investigate the genres offered and the kinds of texts used for such world literature courses (see appendices). Of the sixty colleges surveyed, forty-eight colleges responded. Nine of the respondents were four-year public institutions; thirty were private four-year institutions. In the area of the junior and community colleges, replies were received from five in the public sector and four in the private sector. Thirty-seven of the total number of colleges responding indicated that a world literature course was offered at the sophomore level; two colleges offered a world literature course to freshmen; nine institutions did not offer world literature at either level. Of the thirty-nine colleges that offered world literature courses, twenty-five stated that these courses were part of the lower division general education requirements; the remaining fourteen colleges offered world literature courses as electives or as optional offerings to fulfill general education requirements.

Sixty-four percent of the colleges surveyed preferred the use of an anthology for a text; fourteen percent used separate texts including paperbacks for individual classics; eighteen percent used an anthology supplemented by paperback materials; the remaining colleges

provided reading lists for students. The names of texts used were not requested in the questionnaire. Choice of texts was considered as an individual departmental matter.

In response to the question concerning the genres in which study in world literature was offered to the students, drama, poetry, non-fiction, and the novel were listed in that order as most widely used.

Replies to the opinion question, "Should the term 'world literature' refer to Western civilization only?", varied in length and intensity; nevertheless, eighty-six percent of the respondents agreed that the term "world literature" should not refer to the literature of Western civilization only.

Dr. Brinley Ryhs, chairman of the English department at the University of the South, wrote: "We consider our sophomore 'World Literature' course simply as a tool, i.e., it consists of works outside English which anyone who wishes to consider himself educated must know in order to understand English literature, e.g., Homer, the Greek tragedians, Dante etc." A firm reply from Carson-Newman College said in part, "We are committed to the cultural richness for sophomores [found in] the world literature courses." Free Will Baptist answered in a similar vein, ". . . the courses regularly scheduled for sophomores at our school are in world literature. In fact, the English faculty and the

faculty at large encourage students to take world literature as their general education requirement. . . . Our faculty and administration have the opinion that if we are to prepare our students adequately for leadership positions in a world community it is imperative that we acquaint them with world literature." LeMoyne-Owen College and Lee College replied that they offered world literature as one of the options for fulfilling general education requirements.

In the four-year public institutions of higher learning, six of the nine colleges indicated that world literature was offered at the sophomore level. Answering for the English department at Memphis State University, J. Lasley Dameron stated that ". . . sophomore offerings in literature generally termed 'Western civilization' have grown in both interest and enrollment." B. T. Stewart of U.T. Knoxville stated frankly that he personally preferred literature of the Western world. The English department at Middle Tennessee State University, at the time that this survey was taken, was in the process of revamping its general education courses at both the freshman and sophomore levels. At the present time, some of the lower division courses which will be open to sophomores are not fully defined. The overall picture, however, appears to be one of strong emphasis on general literature with second

semester offerings in American Literature or Contemporary World Literature.

Little, if any, similarity can be seen between the offerings of English departments in the four-year public and four-year private colleges. Not too surprisingly, attitudes at the two-year public and two-year private colleges reflect those of their larger counterparts. In the private sector, only four of the junior colleges responded to the questionnaire. Three of these indicated that world literature is offered to sophomores; the fourth college, Cumberland College, replied that world literature had been offered previously, but the course was dropped from the curriculum because of the difficulties that students encountered when they attempted to transfer the course for credit to senior colleges. However, Cumberland College's respondent appended his personal opinion to the bottom of the questionnaire to the effect that a world literature course ". . . is the best literature course to offer sophomores." The respondent from Martin College at Pulaski wrote, ". . . most instructors think of and teach world literature as Western world only and avoid texts laden with Oriental literature."

Replies from the two-year public colleges were generally negative in tone. James Kinney, chairman of the Division of Humanities at Columbia State Community College

indicated that world literature was offered when the college first opened, but it was discontinued because of poor student response.

From the data available, one rather obvious conclusion can be drawn: a majority (81.25%) of English departments in the colleges and universities of Tennessee subscribe to the belief that world literature courses should be offered at the lower division level. This is true not only of the two-year and four-year private colleges but also of the four-year public institutions of higher learning. The fact that the majority of two-year public colleges place no emphasis on world literature courses is not surprising when one considers the major purposes of these institutions.

It is quite apparent from the survey that a wide variety of approaches to the teaching of world literature courses exists; nevertheless, it is also equally apparent that the need for offerings in world literature plays an important role in the thinking and practices of English departments in a majority of Tennessee's colleges and universities.

The most significant result of the survey lies in the fact that it appears to bear out on a small scale, though in more specific detail, the concerns of those English departments interviewed by Thomas W. Wilcox prior to

his national survey in 1969. Both surveys show conclusively that, to all intents and purposes, concern for the student and for what constitutes a good education for him remains the primary purpose of all institutions of higher learning in America.

CHAPTER V

Conclusion

Two major conclusions can be drawn from this investigation into the need for including courses in world literature in restructured programs of general education at the college and university level.

The first conclusion, one which is supported by the literature, by the information elicited from surveys, and by the comments and the judgments of professional scholars and educators in the fields of English and higher education, is that there is a definite trend toward the holistic concept in the teaching of literature. If Maxwell Goldberg is correct in his view that the holistic approach to curriculum planning is necessary to the education of students so that they can achieve human competence in an age of constant technological changes,¹ then it follows that required courses in world literature at the freshman and/or sophomore levels can offer a student subjective vicarious experiences that provide essential continuity in his education,

¹Maxwell H. Goldberg, Design in Liberal Learning (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, Inc., Publishers, 1971), pp. 54-55.

experiences which are relevant to all of man's ethics and social systems.

No longer is English conceived as an autotelic discipline and literature as a distinct body of work unrelated to modern man's needs and sensibilities.² The dangers inherent in this trend are obvious, however. The treatment of literature as social therapy reduces education to the acquisition of social attitudes considered proper by those who teach and interpret it. To convert literature courses into classes in current events is to deny the riches of the literary world to the unsuspecting and naïve freshman or sophomore whose provincial interests already impede his ability to develop powers of discrimination and critical habits of mind beyond the most practical and mundane level. This study suggests that such "relevancy" in literature courses tends to reinforce the students' concept of worthwhile literature.

The second and perhaps more important conclusion is that, despite the clamor of students for the instant utilization of every idea with which they come into contact, there is a body of recognized scholars and educators,

²Lionel Trilling, Beyond Culture: Essays on Literature and Learning (New York: The Viking Press, 1965), pp. 54-55.

including Lionel Trilling³ and Theodore de Bary⁴ among others, who continue to stand firmly in the belief that, whatever the method, whatever the approach, all students need to see not only the relationship of literature to life, but even more essentially they need to see, to feel, and to understand the cultural experiences expressed in the literary works of all civilizations both past and present.

On the other hand, faculty and department heads are aware that English enrollments have been declining since 1972 as students continue to seek practical, vocational training which will bring them economic security. Alarmed by the suddenly bleak prospects of unemployment, students hesitate to enroll in courses which can not be utilized to good advantage or to promote salable skills.

Unfortunately for those in the field of liberal arts, the public's respect and admiration for institutions of higher learning have diminished at a time when the cost of education has risen sharply. Events which have forced stringent economic measures on colleges and universities have created similar difficulties for their graduates who hope to find positions commensurate with their academic qualifications.

³Ibid.

⁴Theodore de Bary, "General Education and the University Crisis," an address presented at the University Center for Rational Alternatives Conference, Sept. 21, 1973.

As this study has also shown, there is a group of educators, of whom Lewis B. Mayhew can be considered representative,⁵ who insist that a practical, relevant education is the only kind that should be offered to students. Certainly the present economic situation lends credence to this viewpoint. If the justification of all study is its practical, relevant immediacy, then perhaps the study of world literature has no place in a college curriculum. In this same context, then, it follows that there is no need for any program of general education, the kind of program which has always provided students with a broader base of knowledge than they would otherwise receive. Herein lies the core of disagreement. Should general education programs with their prescribed course work be eliminated from college curricula?

The results of this investigator's survey indicate that the issue has not yet been resolved, and perhaps it never shall be; however, the present trend appears to be toward modification of the traditional general education curriculum either through the elimination of some requirements or by offering electives to fulfill existing requirements. Thus, the student has some choice in the

⁵Lewis B. Mayhew, Contemporary College Students and the Curriculum (Atlanta: Southern Regional Education Board, 1969), pp. 68-71.

matter rather than being restricted to specific courses as he was formerly.

One general fault that appears to be basic to programs of general education lies in the Western, provincial thinking that is revealed in the curriculum construction in American institutions of higher education. Nowhere is this more clearly seen and less justified than in the English undergraduate general education programs. The emphasis placed on the culture and values of Western civilization, and on American values and culture in particular, not only predetermines subject matter content but it also molds the values of students. The vast, complex amount of knowledge relating to both Western and Eastern civilizations precludes the offering of a single solution to the problem, but whatever approach is used an appreciation of both civilizations must be generated in American students.

At the beginning of the study, this writer promised to provide some general guidelines for the development of course offerings in world literature which would be of value to those in the field of English whose special province is the teaching of world literature. Some points worth consideration are listed below:

1. Careful consideration shall be given in overall departmental planning to avoid presenting a limited, Western-oriented view of world literature.

2. General education programs are the best means through which English departments can provide world literature experiences that can touch the minds of every college student, regardless of his major academic interests.
3. Choice of textbooks, genres, and teaching approaches should remain within the departmental purview, but in every instance the all-inclusive meaning of the term world literature should be considered fundamental to the concept of employing the course offerings as a viable means of establishing necessary lines of communication between the past and the present for all students.
4. World literature courses should provide students with an appreciation of the writings of older, often unfamiliar civilizations that are as much a part of the students' own cultural heritage as are the contributions of modern European and American authors.
5. World literature courses should be brought back into the educational mainstream where they can be used as compensatory, experiential guideposts by the technology-ridden chiliads who make up the greater portion of today's college students.

The English departments in every college and university in America must make every effort to create an academic atmosphere conducive to dispelling the cultural vacuum in which their students exist. The simplest and most effective way to reach all students is to provide them with the opportunity to look beyond their own immediate world--not into the unpredictable future, but into the past wealth of a cultural heritage which may provide guideposts to the future.

If the study of world literature can serve as the
equilibrant between the past and the present, between
reading about life and experiencing it with a new awareness,
then the need for including such study in general education
programs can be justified in the name of humanism.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

General Education Questionnaire

General Education Questionnaire

1. Does the English Department offer courses in world literature at the lower division level?
 freshman level sophomore level neither
2. If courses in world literature are offered in your department at the lower division level, are they offered as:
 general education requirements? electives?
3. What type of text is used?
 anthology separate texts for individual classics other
4. Do the courses afford study in more than one genre?
 drama poetry novels non-fiction
 other
5. In your opinion, should the term "world literature" refer to the literature of Western civilization only?
 yes no
6. Any additional comments would be greatly appreciated.

Return to

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APPENDIX B

Summary of World Literature Course Offerings
at the Lower Division Level in 48 Colleges
and Universities in Tennessee

Summary of World Literature Course Offerings
at the Lower Division Level in 48 Colleges
and Universities in Tennessee

<u>COLLEGE</u>	<u>Freshman Level</u>	<u>Sophomore Level</u>
A. Four-year public institutions		
Austin Peay State University	---	X
East Tennessee State University	---	---
Memphis State University	---	X
Middle Tennessee State University	---	---
Tennessee State University	---	X
Tennessee Technological University	---	---
UT Chattanooga	---	X
UT Knoxville	---	X
UT Martin	---	X
TOTAL	0	6
B. Two-year public institutions		
Cleveland State Community College	---	---
Columbia State Community College	---	---
Dyersburg State Community College	---	X
Jackson State Community College	---	---
Volunteer State Community College	---	---
TOTAL	0	1

<u>COLLEGE</u>	<u>Freshman Level</u>	<u>Sophomore Level</u>
C. Four-year private institutions		
Belmont College	---	X
Bethel College	---	X
Bryan College	X	X
Carson-Newman College	---	X
Christian Brothers College	---	X
Covenant College	---	X
David Lipscomb College	---	X
Fisk University	---	X
Free Will Baptist College	---	X
George Peabody College	---	X
Hiwassee College	---	X
Johnson Bible College	---	X
King College	---	X
Knoxville College	---	X
Lambuth College	---	X
Lane College	---	X
Lee College	---	X
LeMoyne-Owen College	---	X
Lincoln Memorial College	---	X
Maryville College	X	X
Siena College	---	X
Southern Missionary College	---	---
Southwestern at Memphis College	---	X
Tennessee Temple College	---	X
Tennessee Wesleyan	---	---
Trevecca Nazarene College	---	X
Union University	---	X
University of Chattanooga	---	X
University of the South	---	X
Vanderbilt University	---	---
TOTAL	2	27

<u>COLLEGE</u>	<u>Freshman Level</u>	<u>Sophomore Level</u>
D. Two year private institutions		
Aquinas Junior College	---	X
Cumberland College	---	---
Freed-Hardeman College	---	X
Martin College	---	X
TOTAL	0	3
GRAND TOTAL	2	37

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